

SUZUKI PIANO SCHOOL:
SUPPORT FROM CONTEMPORARY MUSIC LEARNING RESEARCH

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Humanities: Music

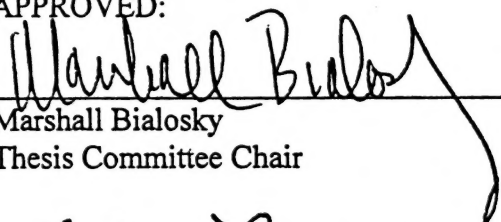
by
Jeanne Beegle
Spring 1998

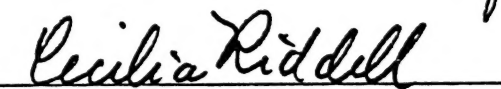
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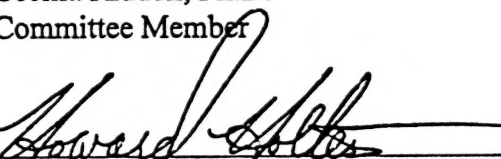
THESIS: SUZUKI PIANO SCHOOL: SUPPORT FROM CONTEMPORARY
MUSIC LEARNING RESEARCH

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Dedicated
to the memory of
Shin'ichi Suzuki
1898-1998

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to give evidence in support of the Suzuki teaching approach, with emphasis on the Suzuki Piano School. The author examines the main features of the method and presents background information and research findings to show that it is pedagogically sound.

Methods employed include reporting on research in the field of music learning, personal observation, and interview.

Specific topics covered include talent development, the learning process, brain research, music for the very young, and the music learning sequence. The author reports on personal experience with Suzuki and traditional methods. Also included are interviews with parents and educators. Research evidence is then compared with the features of Suzuki teaching.

Based on analysis of the data obtained by the above methods, the author concludes that the teaching principles and techniques employed by Suzuki educators are pedagogically sound and supported by contemporary music learning research.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The contribution of music to the growth and development of children is well documented throughout history. According to Aristotle, “Since music has so much to do with the molding of character, it is necessary that we teach it to our children” (McDonald 1). Centuries later, researcher J. Craig Peery expressed a similar outlook when he wrote in his book Music and Child Development (1987), “those who involve themselves with, and love, music seem to have humor, common sense, a wholesome decency, emotional openness, a hearty love of life, and a sort of cosmic wisdom in larger doses than many others” (viii). In a recent survey of 108 early childhood textbooks, Peery found that many educators believe the benefits of music to extend beyond the pursuit of a musical career.

Fig. 1

Percentage of textbook writers (n=108) endorsing each reason for teaching music to young children

%	Reason
70	Provides self-expression and creative pleasure.
67	Fosters motor and rhythmic development.
46	Develops an aesthetic sense.
31	Teaches vocal and language development.
26	Promotes cultural heritage.
25	Promotes cognitive development and abstract thought.
20	Teaches social and group skills.
11	Helps child feel positive about self.
7	Provides a cathartic release of tensions and aggressions.
6	Develops musicians.

Source: J. C. Peery, ed., Music and Child Development (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1987) 197. Reproduced with permission. All rights reserved.

Shin'ichi Suzuki, Japanese music educator and developer of the Talent Education movement, likewise believes that if one learns to work at playing a musical instrument well, “he develops the talent to overcome any difficult problem by working” (1981, 62). Suzuki also believes that musical talent is not an inborn gift, but an ability that anyone can develop with the “right education” (5). From this belief, Suzuki developed a music teaching method for violin, which was later applied to piano and other instruments. His teaching approach is the main focus of this thesis. Suzuki is not a scientist or a researcher. In fact, some call him a philosopher. However, the latest findings in contemporary music learning research support his teaching philosophy and methodology.

Statement of the Problem

The main focus of this thesis is to present evidence in support of the Suzuki teaching methodology, with emphasis on the Suzuki Piano School. As a Suzuki piano instructor, I want my students to get the best possible foundation in music. Therefore, I feel that it is important for parents to know about the positive support available for the Suzuki method from unbiased studies. It is also important for educators to have this information so they, too, can understand the benefits of musical training for their students.

My interest and qualifications for dealing with these issues lie in my personal experience, both as a Suzuki piano teacher for the past four years, and as a traditional piano teacher for three and a half years before that. Throughout this period, and even before in my personal studies, I have had the opportunity to try out various piano teaching methods. I have attended numerous piano teaching seminars and workshops, and I am certified in piano pedagogy through a two-year Conservatory program. I am also trained to teach the Suzuki piano method. It has been my personal experience to see a positive difference in progress and commitment in Suzuki students when compared with those using traditional approaches.

Rationale for Pursuing the Problem

Music learning research studies show that the right training at the right time can increase a child's capacity for music learning, stimulate perception, foster creative thinking and behavior, and provide the motor skills necessary for personal expression. It is up to music teachers to take advantage of this positive support in an effort to better understand how children perceive and learn music. By doing so, they will be in a better position to motivate their students and convince parents about the benefits and best methods of musical training.

One reason this discussion is significant is because few writers have considered the idea of applying the findings of music learning research to the Suzuki approach. In my research, scores of publications were consulted, scholarly and popular. In these sources, very little was written specifically about the Suzuki method. This study is also important and relevant because Suzuki does not support his ideas with organized research studies. His written "proof" consists primarily of anecdotes from personal experience. The research I have gathered thus serves to support what Suzuki says.

Until recently, most reporting about the benefits of an early music education has been either anecdotal or observational. However, in the last ten years, MRI technology and other clinical procedures have become available for use in learning research. This has opened up a whole new area of support for children's musical training. The next section explains how I have organized the findings to support the ideas presented.

Methods and Procedures

Chapter 2, which is the core of this thesis, contains a review of literature in which I bring together writings on talent development and music learning. Because of the extent of the

information available, the review is presented in sections. The first section is a review of Suzuki literature, describing the ideas of Shin'ichi Suzuki, originator of the method. Also included are writings by Haruko Kataoka, co-developer of the Suzuki Piano School, and by selected American Suzuki piano educators. Kataoka, who studied with Suzuki early in her career, has done extensive investigation in applying his teaching principles to piano teaching. The next section provides information about talent development and the importance of starting music training at a young age. Reports on music learning research will be used to support the philosophical and pedagogical aspects of the Suzuki method. Finally, I will point to recent reports in the popular press about scientific research that gives new importance to music training for very young children.

Chapter 3 outlines the main features of Suzuki method. Suzuki lists the conditions necessary for ability development: "1) the earlier period; 2) better environment; 3) the better teaching method; 4) more training; and 5) a superior instructor" (1969, 20). These conditions are explained in detail, along with their practical applications.

Chapter 4 shows how the research supports the Suzuki method by drawing parallels between the Suzuki teaching features outlined in Chapter 3 and the research findings reported in Chapter 2. For clarity of presentation, the format used is the same as the one used in Chapter 3. Comments about the observations are made, as appropriate, and some conclusions are drawn.

Chapter 5 is a discussion of my own field work, consisting of an interview survey carried out to enhance the knowledge gained from research. My goal was to glean information from people using the Suzuki method in the 1990s. Parents and Suzuki teachers were questioned about the Suzuki methodology, their personal experiences with the method, and their observations about the benefits of Suzuki training.

In Chapter 6, I make my conclusions and recommendations. This chapter begins with an overview of all ideas presented, and is followed by a discussion of how the conclusions were drawn. The discussion centers on the Suzuki method as the method of choice for piano instruction. Finally, there is a consideration of further work that still needs to be done in the area of music learning. A helpful research feature is the structure of the Bibliography, which includes separate listings for books, academic and scientific journals, magazines, newspapers, and miscellaneous items.

Scope of the Thesis

The scope of this thesis is to report on music learning research with the objective of supporting the Suzuki philosophy and methodology. It is not designed to be a "How To" manual, and it is not an historical account of Suzuki and other music teaching methods. Neither is it a story about individual students, an informal essay, or a personal account. Rather, it is a formal study that is organized to prove a particular point, that is, the Suzuki piano method is a pedagogically sound teaching approach which is supported by contemporary research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature was reviewed in order to provide a solid foundation for developing background information and support for the Suzuki teaching philosophy and methodology.

Research on music learning yielded an enormous amount of information. Some of the literature reviewed deals directly with the Suzuki method (also called Talent Education), while other literature deals with music learning in general. Examples of this include sections on music learning research and talent. Still more broad but equally relevant is the information about brain research, intelligence, and the learning process.

The following review of literature was organized to present theoretical material and scientific research in order to support the Suzuki method as a pedagogically sound music teaching approach. Since there is much data, the information is presented in chronological sections:

1. Literature specific to Suzuki (Talent Education dates back to 1945)
2. Music learning research (most research has taken place since the 1970s)
3. Popular press reports (scientific research available mainly in the last 10 years)

Much of the literature specific to Suzuki teaching speaks from the heart of its beginnings and includes writings by its originators. Since my focus is on piano teaching, I also include information specific to that instrument. In addition, there is material by American music educators who have successfully adopted the Suzuki piano method.

The section relating to music learning research presents research findings that support Suzuki's ideas. Topics progress from general to specific, and include the learning process in general, the subject of talent, and subject matter specific to music learning.

Finally, a review of recent reports in the popular press emphasizes the importance of early musical training. Due to this exposure in the news media, music education is experiencing a surge of new interest. The new information, in turn, provides added support for the Suzuki teaching approach.

Suzuki Talent Education

The contributions of two major individuals are considered here. First, I will discuss the writings of Shin'ichi Suzuki, president and founder of the Talent Education School in Matsumoto, Japan. It is his philosophy and its application to violin teaching that forms the basis of Suzuki instruction for all instruments. Next, I will describe the work of Haruko Kataoka, co-developer of the Suzuki Piano School. Kataoka's work is primarily

the result of her personal study with Suzuki and her observation of his work with his own students. I will also report on several American music educators who have written about their experiences with the Suzuki piano method.

Shin'ichi Suzuki. Suzuki's teaching philosophy is based on the belief that all humans have a "tremendous potential to learn" if the education is right. According to Shin'ichi Suzuki (1898-1998), "Talent is no accident of birth ... We are born with natural ability to learn" (1983, ix). He made it his life's work to prove that with correct training he could produce superior abilities in anyone, regardless of inherited characteristics (1983, 1). In his writing, Suzuki uses the words talent and ability interchangeably. In Ability Development from Age Zero (1981), he explains that the use of these two words can also be applied to personality traits. For example, he says one can have the "ability to be argumentative," or the "talent to be considerate" (vii). This agrees with the definition and usage of the words talent and ability by contemporary researchers, which will be explained later in this thesis.

Suzuki's concept of the "right education" implies that there is a specific learning process involved (1981, 5). He illustrates the music learning process by means of an analogy to the process of learning language. His system is thus known as the "mother tongue" approach. In his best known book, Nurtured by Love, Suzuki observes, "all children throughout the world speak their native tongues with the utmost fluency" (1983, 1). Although seemingly obvious, this fact is significant because Suzuki believes it holds the key to learning. He reasons that, since children can easily master something as challenging as learning a language, they likewise have the ability to master music (or any other skill) if presented in the same way—through observation, imitation, repetition, and gradual intellectual awareness. A baby is born into a language-filled environment. Parents and caregivers lovingly encourage "practice" by means of playful repetition. There are no "mistakes," just steps in the process. Thus, a child cannot help but learn his native tongue; it happens naturally. Suzuki believes that if there is music in one's environment from the start, music learning will also be natural.

Suzuki emphasizes the importance of beginning music learning early. At the start of the Talent Education movement in 1945, when he was asked to help found the Matsumoto Music School, he said that he wanted to try infant music education rather than do "repair" work on those who could already play the violin (1983, 29). Today, at Matsumoto, students as young as two are successfully taught to play various instruments.

Suzuki recommends music listening as the most natural first step to music learning. He believes that the ability to feel beautiful music is decided by the music in a person's early environment (1983, 10). Just as with language, this can begin at birth, or even earlier. From a pedagogical standpoint, Suzuki explains that music listening serves as excellent preparation for music reading. He believes that music notation makes much more sense when a context of listening experience has been established.

Suzuki points out that the most important and influential element in a child's early environment is the parent. That's why he includes parents in the teaching process. He asks parents to provide loving encouragement and support so that their child's education

is not left to chance. One way or another, reasons Suzuki, a child will be educated. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that it doesn't happen in a random way.

Is musical talent inherited? Suzuki contends that it must be "learned and trained" through the child's environment (1983, 20). In *Nurtured by Love*, Suzuki explains his understanding of the relationship between heredity and environment:

I am convinced that it is *only* the body's physiological functioning ability that can be measured as either superior or inferior at the time of birth. From then on, *only* psychological influences are received *from the child's environment*. And it is the conditions of that environment that shape the core of his ability ... Abilities are born and developed by the working of the vital forces of the organism as it strives to live and to adapt to its environment right in the beginning. Therefore, *the only superior quality a child can have at birth is the ability to adapt itself with more speed and sensitivity to its environment than others* (13).

Suzuki is not a theoretician or a researcher. Neither did he organize any published studies. In fact, his writing style borders on philosophical, with anecdotes that emphasize the practical—that is, how to create a nurturing environment. Emphasizing the need for correct practice, Suzuki explains, "The development of ability cannot be accomplished by mere thinking or theorizing ... Ability develops through practice" (1983, 18). He contends that ability training needs time and repeated stimulation because what does not exist in the environment cannot develop.

Suzuki feels that the "mother tongue" process can be used to teach anything. Therefore, his philosophy also includes the development of character, "a kind of ability formed through the adaptation of potential ability to the environment and its stimulation" (1969, 55). This, Suzuki feels, is the most important training. In fact, he has chosen as his own guiding principle, "First character, then ability" (1983, 66). It is beyond the scope of this thesis to treat character development in detail, but the notion is relevant because it underscores the concept of talent development through environment.

Suzuki Piano School. Haruko Kataoka (1927—) is important here because of her contributions to the development of the Suzuki Piano School, which is the result of her personal study with Suzuki. Kataoka became interested in Suzuki's work after hearing his lecture entitled, "Talent is not inborn; everything depends on how it is fostered." The following year, at age thirty, she moved to Matsumoto to observe his teaching and to study with him. Kataoka's piano teaching ideas came out of this experience, which led to a lifetime of researching the application of Suzuki's method to piano teaching. Kataoka teaches piano at Matsumoto and leads workshops worldwide.

Like Suzuki, Kataoka believes that all children have a natural ability to learn. In her book *Sensibility and Education* (1993), she emphasizes that the most natural way to educate children is to prepare their environment so that knowledge does not interfere with sensibility. Karen Hagberg, who studied with Kataoka and translated the above book, explains in her Preface that, according to the first definition in *Webster's New World*

Dictionary (1988), sensibility is “the capacity for physical sensation; power of responding to stimuli; ability to feel” (xii). Hagberg explains that sensibility is closely related to the Japanese word kansei, which is the original word used in the book’s Japanese title. Kansei refers to the ability of children to learn through the senses without logical explanation.

In traditional education, Kataoka observes, knowledge is the primary teaching device. The result of having only knowledge, she observes, “is that 80% of the students cease being able to move their bodies naturally ... In any other enterprise, if only 20% of the work were well done, we certainly would not expect success” (1993, 5-7). Because music exists in the realm of the senses, she reasons, knowledge alone is insufficient. Kataoka believes that, because the senses are stimulated by what is in the environment, “a good environment is what constitutes education for sensibility” (1993, 22).

Kataoka stresses the importance of music listening because she feels that it “makes all the rest of music education possible” (1993, 68). She maintains that by listening to fine music from infancy, children will develop good taste and an acute ear. It is important to include complex classical works because, she reasons, if babies are exposed only to simple music, they will grow accustomed to it and come to prefer it. Children must also be trained to listen to the tone produced by their instrument. For this reason, it is important to have a fine quality instrument that is kept in tune.

Kataoka emphasizes the importance of parental assistance because 3- to 5-year-olds cannot make plans. That is why adults have the responsibility of educating children. Young children learn by experiencing things for themselves, but it is the adults who must provide them with high quality experiences. Consequently, a good parent-child relationship is critical. Patience and effort are needed because children do not usually understand what parents are trying to do. Observes Bruce Anderson, American Suzuki piano teacher who studied with Kataoka at Matsumoto, “the Suzuki Method is actually adult education. The child’s learning takes place by nature ... Teachers and parents must ... learn how to assist it, not hinder it” (1993, 99).

In her book Thoughts on the Suzuki Piano School (1985), Kataoka explains the application of Suzuki’s method to piano teaching. She includes a detailed explanation of teaching beginners, especially the concept of the “one-point lesson,” which involves focusing on only one problem at a time. This, she believes, is the most efficient way to learn because it ensures the establishment of each basic skill before proceeding to the next. Students, therefore, must be taught how to practice and how to solve problems. She also believes that music reading and theory should be introduced after performance skills are established.

Kataoka’s book My Thoughts on Piano Technique (1988) is an important reference for piano teachers. In it she explains in detail the various aspects of piano technique. Topics covered include teaching the fingers to “walk” freely across the keys, achieving relaxed arms and stable wrists, and working with the troublesome thumb and weak fifth finger. She also explains how to teach dynamics, legato, staccato, and chords. Kataoka points out that the piano is to be played not just with the fingers, but with the entire body. Of

utmost importance, therefore, is a balanced posture. To achieve this, the height of the chair, the footrest, and the distance from the piano should all be periodically adjusted to accommodate growth. She further emphasizes that, because music is sound, learning to concentrate and listen is of critical importance.

American Suzuki Piano Educators. Since its introduction in the United States around 1970, many music teachers have adopted the Suzuki method. Several have written about their experiences. All espouse the basic Suzuki philosophy that every child is born with a potential to learn, and all recognize the “mother-tongue” approach as the natural way to learn. This consists of an early start, the importance of music listening, parent involvement, and pedagogical considerations such as ear training and reading. To illustrate this in a practical setting, I have selected Doris Koppelman as an example of the contemporary American Suzuki piano teacher. Afterwards, I will point out the individual and unique features of several other writers.

In her book, Introducing Suzuki Piano (1978), Koppelman focuses on the idea that all children have the potential to develop talent. She also stresses the importance of music listening and of starting early. In addition, she outlines practical suggestions for both teachers and parents, and offers helpful guidelines for practice and for improving the home environment. She also discusses posture, seating, and use of a footrest.¹

Koppelman feels strongly that the parent is the key figure in the child’s education. She also believes that, because children are great imitators, they will learn whatever we teach them—good or bad. Therefore, it is the teacher’s responsibility to educate the parent with specific instructions on how to follow through at home. It is also important for the teacher to continue learning and researching piano teaching and technique.

The reader may want to consult the writings of the following additional Suzuki piano educators for their unique contributions:

1. In Studying Suzuki Piano More than Music (1979), Carole Bigler and Valerie Lloyd-Watts stress the parent’s role and the importance of sensitivity to the individual needs of each student. A unique and helpful feature of this book is an extensive section for teachers outlining the teaching steps of all the pieces in the Suzuki piano repertoire.
2. William and Constance Starr have written an important handbook for parents, To Learn With Love (1983). The Starrs stress sensitivity to individual growth patterns and give practical ideas for motivation and for improving the home environment.
3. Mary Craig Powell (Focus on Suzuki Piano, 1988) provides dozens of specific and creative motivational ideas for both parents and teachers to use with students.

Other interesting and informative writers about the Suzuki method include Susan Bauman, Ray Landers, Elizabeth Mills, and Cynthia Richards. Each of these teachers has unique and special qualities. Their experiences show how Suzuki’s ideas can be

¹ See APPENDIX B: DIAGRAM FOR BUILDING AN ADJUSTABLE FOOTREST.

implemented in individual and creative ways. Their references can be found in the Bibliography.

Section Summary. From the literature reviewed so far, we have established that Suzuki's teaching philosophy centers around the idea that anyone can develop talent with correct training. We have also considered the application of his methodology to piano teaching. However, none of the above writers are researchers or scientists. Although they offer valuable insights, their reports are mostly observational and anecdotal. The purpose of the rest of this chapter is to bring together research that supports their conclusions.

Talent Development

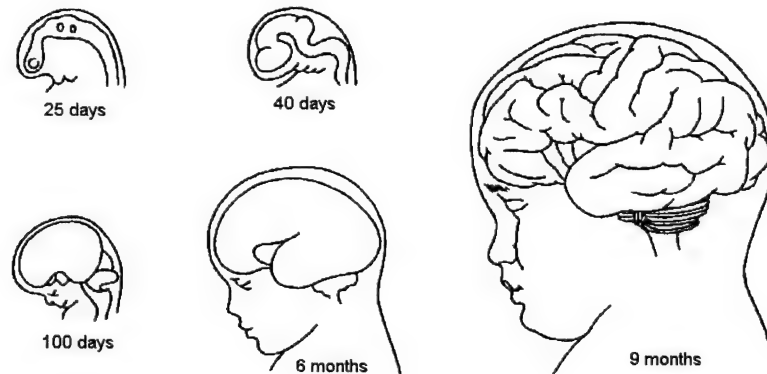
Central to the Suzuki philosophy is the idea of talent development. There is much research to support Suzuki's concept of talent, which he believes is acquired ability. Learning researcher Benjamin Bloom (1985), for example, defines talent as "an unusually high level of demonstrated ability, achievement, or skill in some special field of study or interest" (5). In Music and the Brain (1980), Macdonald Critchley and R. A. Henson use the terms talent and ability interchangeably, explaining that talent involves an ability, or skill, which must be learned (156). Music psychologists Donald Hodges (1980) and Rosamund Shuter-Dyson (1981) point out that musical talent is a complex phenomenon comprised of many abilities, such as pitch and rhythm discrimination, and performance skills.

The purpose of this section is to report on studies supporting the idea that musical talent is a skill that must be developed, or learned. Topics covered include the learning process, importance of the early period, and genetic and environmental considerations.

How Learning Takes Place. If we are to understand the concept of talent development in the context of skill learning, as presented by Suzuki, it is necessary to first understand how learning takes place. The learning process is a fascinating study that has been undertaken by many researchers. For this discussion, I have consulted the work of brain researchers Critchley and Henson (1980), and learning specialists Arthur Harvey (1986) and Jane Healy (1987).

Healy provides a detailed account of the learning process in her book, Your Child's Growing Mind (1987). She explains that brain cells begin to form about three weeks after conception and multiply more rapidly than any other body cells (see Fig. 2). At birth, the brain already contains all of its more than 100 billion neurons, which will be organized into systems for perceiving, thinking and remembering. Each neuron comes with a network of hairlike receptors called dendrites, and a single projecting axon. At birth, the neurons are undeveloped, but during the first six months of life they are activated by sensory messages from the environment. Each neuron picks up signals with its dendrites from the axons of neighboring neurons—the signals jump over a gap called a synapse by means of a complex electrical and chemical process. Researchers recognize that learning begins with these synaptic connections, which are further strengthened and enriched by repeated use. Cells that don't develop synapses will die, a fact that emphasizes the importance of early and continued stimulation.

Fig. 2
Brain development before birth



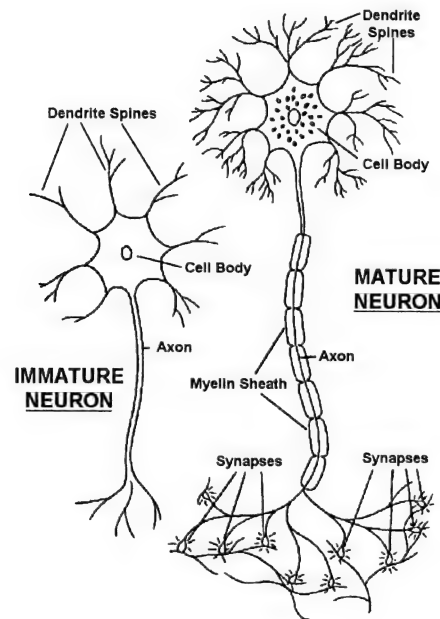
Source: Jane M. Healy, Your Child's Growing Mind (New York: Doubleday, 1987) 13. Reproduced with permission. All rights reserved.

Researchers point out that, during the first year of life, brain weight doubles even though the number of cells remains about the same. This is due to the growing mass of connections that are constantly being formed as sensory stimuli are received. Each cell continues to form new dendrite spines until it resembles a heavily branched tree (see Fig. 3). It is the growth of the dendrites, which depends on environmental influences, that determines the ultimate quality of an individual's thinking ability. This information strongly supports Suzuki's claim discussed earlier in this chapter, that "it is the condition of that environment that shapes the core of his ability" (Suzuki 1983, 13).

It is interesting to note that "active interest and mental effort by the child is the key" to the formation of synapses and neural networks (Healy 17). Likewise, Stevie Hoffman (1992) of the University of Missouri, Columbia, affirms that active involvement results in better connections, making the brain more capable. Thus the quality of the intellect, which is measured later, depends on the child's active involvement with, and response to, a wide variety of stimuli in the early stages of development.

Importance of the Early Period. Learning specialists and researchers have discovered the early years to be crucial to music learning. Music educator Carl Orff wrote, "Just as humus in nature makes growth possible, so elementary music gives to the child powers that cannot otherwise come to fruition ... everything in [the child] that has been awakened and nurtured is a determining factor for the whole of his life. Much can be destroyed at this age that can never be regained, much can remain undeveloped that can never be reclaimed" (Campbell 7). With traditional teaching methods, a child usually does not have contact with music educators until school age. However, learning specialists now know that a child learns more in the first six years of life than during any other time. Selected studies are described below.

Fig. 3
The developing neuron: where learning begins



Source: Jane M. Healy, *Your Child's Growing Mind* (New York: Doubleday, 1987) 18. Reproduced with permission. All rights reserved.

In her 1991 article, "Music, Development, and the Young Child," Donna Brink Fox of the Eastman School of Music (Rochester, NY) writes that participants at the 1967 Tanglewood Symposium recommended music education for children even as young as three. They concluded that, contrary to previously held belief, music training should not wait for evidence of precocity, but should be encouraged to the greatest extent possible because early training can make a marked difference in later development.

According to Healy, the first two years of life are the period of most dynamic brain growth, so "early experiences do make a difference in the acquisition of mental skills" (6). Therefore, school age is past the point of crucial stimulation and development. In fact, Healy explains, the first year of life should be viewed as a window of opportunity for building a foundation for music learning because this is when children show the most natural musical interest and ability. By eighteen months, children begin devoting much more attention to language. Some researchers, in fact, believe that musical awareness is far more advanced than language ability. For example, in a 1991 article, "The Preschool Child and Creative Thinking," Peter Webster of Northwestern University points out that babies focus more on the musical qualities of speech than on the actual communication.

Musical aptitude. The formative years are critical to the development of musical aptitude. Edwin Gordon (1990) of Temple University (Philadelphia), who has done

extensive research on music learning, believes that all children are born with some musical aptitude. Gordon explains that music aptitude can actually be developed until about age nine, at which point the aptitude level stabilizes for life. The period from birth to three years is most important, next is three to five years. Least significant is the period from five to nine years. Gordon emphasizes that whether or not children retain their inborn aptitude depends on the musical instruction they receive before they go to school, both in the home and in early childhood programs. An earlier study by G. Révész (1953) found that almost half of randomly selected children showed musical aptitude by age five.

In a 1988 article, “Musical Child Abuse: Musical Aptitude versus Musical Achievement,” Gordon made an important distinction between aptitude and achievement—musical aptitude is the inborn potential to achieve in music; musical achievement is that which has been learned from instruction. Most people who are viewed as having low aptitude are actually demonstrating low achievement. This difference is important because it can determine whether or not one will receive musical training. Too often, parents wait for evidence of talent before giving their children music lessons. This backwards approach can rob young ones of their full potential by preventing the development of talent.

An important aspect of musical aptitude is creativity. Neuropsychologist Howard Gardner of Harvard University, who has spent a large part of his career studying children’s creative development, is convinced that creativity, like all learning, progresses through stages, each of which depends on prior learning. In his book Frames of Mind (1983), Gardner explains that quality early experiences lay the foundation for later creative development. Similarly, Peter Webster (1991) writes, “We cannot expect children to be creative when there is nothing with which to be creative” (18). He insists that the kind of musical experiences a child has in the first five or six years are of major importance to later development. Starting in kindergarten or first grade may be too late.

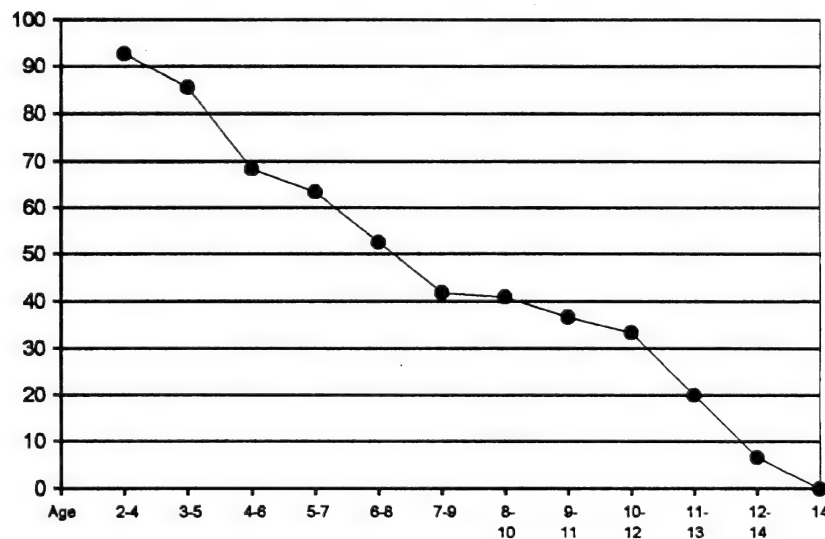
Music preference. An important reason for early music education is the development of attitudes and appreciation. Studies suggest that the brain forms patterns very early in life. Norman Weinberger (1994) of the University of California, Irvine, reports of infants two to four days old who exhibited changes in heart rate and movement upon hearing the theme of a TV program their mothers had watched regularly while pregnant. Even more remarkably, fetuses of 29 to 37 weeks gestation age were found to respond to tunes their mothers had played earlier. In both cases, responses were specific to familiar music. These and other studies strongly indicate that learning of melodies occurs soon after the functional development of the auditory system in utero, around the beginning of the third trimester.

Research shows that repetition is a necessary factor in creating a favorable response to music. Krugman (1943) found that repeated exposure to a particular music style increases a positive response to it (in Peery 1987). Similarly, Ian Bradley (1971) of the University of Victoria (British Columbia) writes, “What one enjoys is determined in a large measure by training and experience” (195). The brain’s affinity to familiar patterns may be partly responsible for the slow rate of acceptance of new music styles, such as

modern, new, or experimental music, because there may not have been enough exposure to it. In his day, even Bach was criticized for “confusing the congregation with many peculiar and foreign tunes” (Allman 60).

It is of great importance that children are early and consistently exposed to a variety of music styles, especially the music of their own culture. It isn’t necessary to understand the music, just to absorb it, notes William Allman (1990). This unconscious process prepares a child for good conscious listening ability later. Since parents have access to the bulk of the child’s time, they have the greatest opportunity to influence a child’s musical style preference and appreciation by providing high quality listening experiences. German researcher Helmut Moog (1976) found that as early as nine months of age, children already expressed dislike on hearing certain music. Therefore, waiting until school age may be too late to influence preferences because, by that time, tastes are established to a large extent. By adulthood, preferences are very difficult to change.

Fig. 4
Relationship of age of beginning instruction to absolute pitch
(Figures on the left indicate the percentage of those having the ability)



Source: G. David Peters and Robert F. Miller, Music Teaching and Learning (New York: Schirmer Books, an imprint of Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1982) 26. Reproduced with permission. All rights reserved.

Absolute pitch. Absolute or perfect pitch is the ability to identify a musical sound without a reference point. The early development of perfect pitch, sometimes by age three, seems to suggest an inborn ability, but according to one questionnaire (Sergeant and Roche, 1973) given to a thousand professional musicians, the opposite seems to be the case. It appears to be directly related to the age when musical training began. Of those who began training before age four, 95% possessed perfect pitch; of those who started between twelve and fourteen years of age, only 5% had the quality (Critchley and

Henson 29). A similar outcome was reported in a survey of fifteen hundred members of the Incorporated Society of Musicians (England), as shown in Fig. 4.

Giftedness. The early years are important for the recognition of giftedness, or high musical aptitude. In his book *Frames of Mind* (1983), Howard Gardner states, “Of all the gifts with which individuals may be endowed, none emerges earlier than musical talent” (99). Unfortunately, says Gardner, a high level of musical aptitude is much less likely to be noticed than a high level of general intelligence. This is because most parents and educators generally lack an understanding of the importance of early music instruction, so a child is more likely to be exposed to academic schooling than to musical training.

Gardner observes that musical abilities seem to run in families. For example, Mozart, Mendelssohn, and Saint-Saëns all came from musical homes. However, he reasons, “non-genetic factors (such as value systems or training procedures) might be equally responsible in such cases” (112-13). While there is considerable dispute over the degree to which giftedness is inherited, Gardner points out that even high aptitudes must be encouraged early in life to result in high ability. This seems to be the case with 19-year-old violin prodigy Leila Josefowicz, who began her training in a Suzuki program at age three. She admits that, although the lessons were fun, she didn’t feel a special urge to play. In fact, she didn’t even care for the violin until she grew into a bigger instrument. It wasn’t until about age eight, when she was practicing three hours a day, that she realized she could get somewhere with it if she wanted to (in Church 1997).

William Hargrove (1992) of the Iowa Board of Education notes that “the primary ingredients in learning to play a musical instrument are discipline and enthusiasm” (15). Carol Rogel Scott (1989) of Seattle Pacific University believes that “early gifts may not result in a lifetime commitment to music, which may depend on the ability ... to commit to discipline” (28-9). Researcher Benjamin Bloom (1985) points out that, because talent development requires a gradual development of commitment, the gifted may not survive the tougher times if things come easy to them early on. This explains why gifted children may not grow up to be accomplished adults.

Bloom observes that the truly gifted make up only a small portion of society. From his research, he concluded that “what any person in the world can learn, almost all persons can learn if provided with appropriate prior and current conditions of learning” (4). His overall observation is that 95% of school students are actually quite similar in measured learning ability and motivation when provided with favorable learning conditions. Only 1% or 2% fall into the category of prodigies because of their unusually capable learning styles (the other 2% or 3% include those with severe emotional and physical impairments). Gordon (1990) clarifies that above average aptitude does not constitute giftedness, and is usually accompanied by a musical environment (9).

Jane Healy offers a slightly different viewpoint. She believes that “all children are both gifted and creative. It is up to parents and teachers to uncover those abilities and help children make the most of them” (284). She points out that most creative people, in fact, are not prodigies, and many eminent artists were not regarded as particularly precocious.

Musical Abilities of the Very Young. Contemporary researchers have found the musical abilities of preschool children to be considerably underestimated. Evidence from various sources suggests that even very young infants can listen attentively and respond to music to a degree which was previously unappreciated. The following is a sample of some of the findings.

In 1973, music psychologist Paul Michel and others (Bimberg, Höchel, Preu, Siegmund-Schultze) conducted research in Germany. Whereas Révész (1946) had expressed the view that the first year of life is of “virtually no importance in music development,” Michel shows that the first six months are actually a period of intense auditory development (14). Researcher J. Craig Peery (1987) calls this early time the “period of learning to hear” (8). Michel’s study tested infant response by observing auro-palpebral reflex (closing of eyelids upon sound stimulus). In the first hours of life, he found that babies reacted to one third of all acoustic stimuli. By 4 weeks, the frequency of their reactions had doubled and continued to increase steadily. At 5 months, Michel observed an emotional response, and sustained listening for up to one half hour.

According to Helmut Moog (1976), babies begin to perceive differences in pitch and timbre very early. Moog cites Walker’s observation (1927) that high pitched voices and instruments had a soothing effect on babies, while the same effect was not noticed in response to male singing or low pitched instruments. Michel found that babies as young as 2 months old could distinguish between two different timbres, and by 7 months they could perceive adjacent pitches as small as two-thirds to one semitone apart.

Most people agree that babies are sensitive to the sound of their own mother’s voice. Researchers who have studied the musical perception skills of newborns have discovered that, during the first days of life, they can also discriminate differences in musical style. For example, in her article “Music, Development, and the Young Child” (1991), Donna Brink Fox reports that a team of researchers found an immediate response in premature infants despite their physical limitations. Beethoven’s “Moonlight Sonata” lowered their heart rate and blood pressure, but Khatchaturian’s “Sabre Dance” had the opposite effect. Sarah Lopez (cited by Fox) found a similar response when she measured the facial expressions, body movements, and states of alertness of newborns in response to two different types of songs—“Brahm’s Lullaby” and the playsong “This Old Man.” A videotape recorded twice as many mouth and body movements with the playsong.

Various researchers report on studies in melodic recognition. Carol Rogel Scott (1989) noted pitch discrimination in infants just out of the womb. Norman Weinberger reports that infants 8 to 11 months old could recognize melodies regardless of changes in key or timbre (in Weinberger 1994). Sandra Trehub (1987) at the University of Toronto found that this age group could also distinguish wrong notes in chords and melodies.

Rhythmic sense, too, has been found to develop rapidly early in life. Weinberger notes that, while their first movements tend to be unorganized, between 7 and 9 months, infants begin to detect changes in tempo by moving their bodies in response to music. From this point on, motor responses gradually decrease until about age 6, when children no longer respond spontaneously to music. Weinberger points out that this decline in

spontaneous movement indicates the end of a developmental period, further emphasizing the importance of not waiting until school age to begin musical training.

Other researchers have noted the importance of the early years on motor development. Based on data gathered by questionnaire, Elizabeth Bedsole at the University of Illinois found 3- and 4-year-olds to be quite capable in coordination tasks and aural discrimination abilities (in Shuter-Dyson 1990). J. Craig Peery (1987) cites research showing that musical motor skills of 4-year-olds improved significantly over those of 6- or 7-year-olds in a one year test period. He further found that early skill development was a good predictor of later skill development. Peery concludes that more attention should be given to helping preschoolers develop musical performance skills.

Various researchers have noted a rapid development in vocal accuracy in the early period. Moog (1976) found that, while a child's first babbling songs have no detectable tonality, by age 2 months infants could match pitch, an ability that quickly became more consistent and accurate. Scott (1989) noted a vocal range of over 3½ octaves in children aged 3 to 9 months, and the first melodic fragments at about one year. By age 2½, most children could imitate familiar songs with correct rhythm and overall contour, and by age 4, they could sing accurately and stay on key. Michel noted that the timing of first attempts as well as the pace of further development are largely dependent on the extent to which those in the baby's life sing and speak to him or her on a daily basis.

Numerous studies support the idea that learning is taking place before birth. According to Gordon, "The most important time for learning in a child's life is from the day she is born (if not before) until she is three years old" (1990, 1). In a comparison study of fetal and newborn responses to music and sound stimuli, Phyllis Wilkin (1994) of Edith Cowan University (Australia) found that babies who were exposed to a specific piece of music from 32 weeks gestation age to 6 weeks newborn age showed significantly more movement responses to music, as well as a greater willingness to listen to the tape. The implications are that parents and educators need to provide the best early learning experiences possible.

Is Musical Talent Inherited? In an address to the 1964 Music Educators National Convention, Suzuki stated, "Scholars of heredity may say that the talents for music, mathematics or literature are there when the baby is born, but I wish to disagree ... culture, built up by mankind, cannot be passed on physically" (Campbell 8). Suzuki here argues against traditional thinking, which often credits such achievements to inborn gifts or inherited aptitudes.

Most researchers agree that heredity and environment are interactive influences in musical development (Gordon 1986, Healy 1987, McDonald 1989). Music educator Don Campbell (1983), for example, points out that education cannot actually produce the human capacity to be musical; it can only build on what is there at birth. Similarly, Gordon believes musical aptitude "is a product of both nature and nurture" (18).

Genetic considerations. Because learning specialists have observed a wide range of developmental difference among children of the same chronological age researchers

continue to search for a genetic link to musicality. Some studies relating to genetics are listed below. While the research is interesting, the outcome remains inconclusive because no child can be completely removed from the environment (even complete isolation qualifies as a type of environment).

1. Brain researchers believe that the physical brain structure is inherited, along with its electrical response patterns to stimuli. However, although individual characteristics vary greatly at birth, all stimuli come from the environment. In examining the backgrounds of twins (identical and non-identical), siblings, and unrelated children, Benjamin Bloom (1964) found environment to be a more significant factor than heredity. His 1985 talent study substantiates these earlier findings.
2. Brain researchers Critchley and Henson (1980) found only a weak link between inherited brain structure and musical ability. In fact, they discovered that the anatomo-functional substratum is the same in a professional musician and a person lacking all musical training (284).
3. Musical talent does seem to cluster in families. However, Critchley and Henson noted problems with pedigree studies, such as the Bach family. For example, few females are recorded at all, talented or not. Lundin (1967) explains that studies of family histories can in fact support the argument for environment because there is no way of accurately knowing the part played by environment (in Shuter-Dyson 1981). In examining random family samples, Critchley and Henson found the degree of musicality in children to be largely proportionate to that in their parents. They conclude that if musical ability were an inborn "gift," its presence should not be so dependent on parental ability.
4. Certain personality traits may also be inherited, such as the tendency to be difficult or easy-going, careful or impulsive, introvert or extrovert. Critchley and Henson believe that this could be an important determining factor in maintaining a commitment to talent development. Still, developmental psychologist Erich Fromm affirms that the personality is malleable and to a large extent subject to environmental influences (Landers 88). To illustrate the complexity of the problem, there is an angle of irony to this—a difficult (or easy-going) child will affect the way others treat him or her. In this sense, the child helps shape his or her own environment.
5. Evidence for cerebral specialization of musical ability remains unclear (Healy 1987; Gardner 1993). Healy reports on the work of neuroanatomist Marian Diamond, who was the first to study samples of Einstein's preserved brain. Diamond discovered that Einstein's brain contained significantly more glial cells, a ratio she attributes not to heredity but to more vigorous use of these particular areas for higher reasoning.
6. Donald Hodges (1989) points to evidence of a genetic link in the fact that musical behavior is present in all cultures throughout the world. He reports on research pointing to a strong connection between musicality and a number of functions essential to human survival—language development, social interaction, communication of emotions. In all

cultures, love is communicated to infants primarily by means of musical elements. Both the rhythmic behaviors (rocking, stroking, patting) and tonal aspects of “motherese” help convey warmth, security, and other emotions. Still, these are learned behaviors.

7. Music has the power to evoke an assortment of psychological and biophysical responses. Studies show that our ability to respond to music in these ways is inherited. Hodges explains that, under certain conditions, music listening stimulates the brain’s output of endorphins, naturally occurring chemicals with a structure similar to morphine. In one experiment, music students had their “thrill” scores recorded while listening to music. Injection with naxolene, an endorphin blocker, caused a marked decrease in their scores. Hodges also describes a type of research called sentics, which studies the brain patterns of different emotions by measuring their engrams, or characteristic shapes. Music has a powerful effect on these patterns. Music therapist Kay Gardner (1990) believes that our ability to respond emotionally to music forms the basis for music therapy.

8. Perhaps the strongest evidence of music’s biological origins lies the fact that the auditory cortex is organized specifically to process musical pitch. Norman Weinberger cites a study by Chung and Colavita (1976) in which pitch perception was demonstrated in animals. They discovered that the brain actually maintains a “frequency map” in which neighboring brain cells are tuned to adjacent sound frequencies. The ability to perceive musical pitch has been confirmed by magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and everyone is born with it (in Weinberger 1994).

9. Schlaug discovered a physical asymmetry in the brains of people with perfect pitch. He says that, while those born with such asymmetries may be predisposed to be musically gifted, the potential can only be realized through musical training (Stipp B10).

10. Experiments by Dr. Robert Zatorre of the Montreal Neurological Hospital showed that perfect pitch runs in families. However, Zatorre notes, those who inherit the trait may not develop it fully unless they are exposed to music early in life (in Blakeslee 1995, “Scientists”). In Japan, where many children begin music study at an early age, the incidence of absolute pitch is 30%, compared to 3% to 8% in the United States and Europe. However, Shuter-Dyson (1981) states that the “value of absolute pitch is open to question” when it comes to musical achievement (60).

Environmental factors. Leading scholars generally agree that there is a strong relationship between musicality and the home environment. Below are some studies relating to environment. The evidence strongly suggests that, regardless of inherited tendencies, environment is the overriding factor.

1. In correlational studies involving scholastic achievement of twins and other siblings, Bloom (1964) found a strong correlation between identical twins reared together, and a much lower correlation between twins raised in different environments. Even non-identical twins and non-twin siblings showed a much higher correlation than did identical twins raised apart. Bloom concludes that “the environment as a variable makes

a major difference in our ability to predict the mature status of a human characteristic” (184).

2. Moore (1973), who studied the pitch and rhythm responses of 101 five-year-olds, found that their “responses correlated with the environmental variables, principally music listening, family interest and participation in music, and parental help with music skills” (in Simons 1986, 38).

3. Shuter-Dyson (1979) notes investigations showing that children from advantaged backgrounds consistently tested favorably compared with those from deprived backgrounds in melodic and rhythmic abilities (130).

4. Gardner (1983) points out that “prodigious accomplishment is not possible without extensive environmental support” (28). Being genetically “at promise” does not ensure that one will acquire high musical ability. He notes that, with certain training methods, such as Suzuki, even individuals with “modest” genetic promise can make remarkable progress in a short time.

5. Peery (1987) states that it is possible for a child to have musical aptitude, but lack the psychomotor ability necessary for performance. Such a child would appear to have less aptitude, but would benefit greatly from early exposure and training.

6. Stevie Hoffman (1992) contends that the “conditions for their development rest far more within children’s learning environment ... than in genetic makeup” (7). It is up to parents and educators to prepare this environment. Parents can help by acquiring a music collection for listening, and by sharing in their children’s musical experiences.

7. Amusia is a loss of musical ability due to brain damage. Gardner (1993) explains that, while the disorder is physical in origin, the degree of loss largely depends on the degree of training (18).

8. Gordon (1990) believes that “a child’s musical aptitude is innate, but it is affected by his environment” (9). Without appropriate stimuli, inborn aptitude begins to decrease shortly after birth. To stress the importance of an early and rich musical environment, Gordon points out that appropriate environmental stimuli can cause aptitude to increase. Still, “a child’s musical aptitude will never rise above its birth level” (9-10).

In view of these reports, we can see why it becomes difficult to pinpoint the degree of inherited aptitude, since inherited factors are of little benefit without environmental support. In reality, both heredity and environment contribute to the development of talent. Even those with high inherited aptitude must have consistent environmental stimulation to achieve a high level of music competence. This knowledge is of critical importance for educators because, while development follows an inherited sequence, environment is the element we can control.

Intelligence and musicality. A topic that relates to the inheritance question is the relationship between musical aptitude and general intelligence. Howard Gardner defines intelligence as a capacity of the human mind having a meaningful role in society (1993, 53). In his research, Gardner observed and identified seven major categories of intelligence that function independently of each other and lead to different types of accomplishment: linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. He believes that, while there may be a natural affinity toward musical ability (or other aptitudes), environment is a much more powerful factor in final outcome (8-9).

Some educators and researchers feel that involvement with music can actually enhance general intelligence by improving higher thinking and reasoning. Gardner, for example, feels that musical experiences are an excellent vehicle for early learning. Douglas Phillips (1976) of the Froebel Institute (London) found a close connection between musicality and intelligence, which he believes is “basically an environmental one—the home that fosters musicality is also likely to foster intelligence” (30).

Researcher Karen Wolff (1978) found that piano and string students scored significantly higher than nonmusical classmates in tests of reading, language, and math. Wolff concluded that, through music training, habits of mind are developed which can transfer to other fields. By increasing attention span, and teaching one how to work and study, music involvement helps influence overall intelligence. Similarly, Dr. Frank Wilson of University of California School of Medicine (1985) feels that interesting and enjoyable early musical challenges will stimulate an appetite for larger challenges later.

Hungarian researcher Zoltan Laczó (1985) of the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest found music training to have a positive and wide transfer effect of on intelligence. He believes this is because intensive music education trains the nonverbal cognitive functions (116). Jane Healy (1987) believes that musical training may have some of its effect on intelligence because “patterns are the key to intelligence” (45). The structure of music is built on patterns.

In a contrasting report, Rosamund Shuter-Dyson (1981) found a low correlation between musicality and general intelligence. However, she did find that specific musical factors show links with other tests: tonal memory and pitch improved language facility; pitch, loudness, time and tonal memory helped with verbal perception; speed and memory factors helped visual and auditory skills (86-7).

In the area of musicality and intelligence, we can see that the research weighs strongly in favor of environmental factors, regardless of inherited aptitudes. In his article entitled “Musical Child Abuse” (1988), Edwin Gordon offers an interesting conclusion: “although musical *achievement* and academic intelligence (IQ) have approximately 25 percent in common, music *aptitude* and academic intelligence (IQ) have almost nothing in common” (16) [*italics added*]. In other words, he found no inborn relationship between musicality and intelligence, but he did find some relationship between musical training and intelligence, indicating that involvement with music is beneficial.

A Talent Study. An important survey on the idea of talent development through environmental support deserves mention here. In his book Developing Talent in Young People (1985), Benjamin Bloom published the results of a four-year retrospective study of twenty-five world class concert pianists. Bloom's focus was on determining the role of home, teachers, schools, and environment in discovering, developing, and encouraging high levels of talent. In this semi-structured interview study, Bloom found that talent development is a long-term continuous process involving commitment and parental support. By the retrospective nature of the study, he found what actually had worked.

Bloom concluded that the key to talent development lies in the early period. In all the families involved, music listening was a natural part of life from the beginning. Most importantly, the parents were involved. They set an example of commitment and stressed "doing one's best." In the early years, many of the parents went to lessons and monitored practice time because, according to one parent, "little children ... wouldn't do it unless they were guided into it" (442). It is interesting to note that in almost all cases, lessons were initiated by the parents, not because the children requested it but because the parents themselves were interested in music and believed that it was good for their children.

Bloom's subjects were not prodigies, and none started out with long term musical goals. In fact, he points out that waiting for signs of talent would have been a mistake because some of the siblings in the study actually showed earlier signs of more promise than did those who actually achieved. In fact, even in their teens, his subjects lost in competitions more often than they did well. Bloom believes that motivation and effort made a bigger difference, by far, than any inborn gift or special quality. Without the continued support of parents and teachers, it would have been difficult if not impossible to maintain the motivation needed to get through the more difficult training levels.

Section Summary. The evidence presented here about the many facets of talent development confirms Suzuki's contention that musical talent is not an inborn gift, but a skill that can be developed in anyone with proper environmental support. The following information will help interested persons make an educated choice of music instruction.

Music Learning Theory

This section opens with an historical overview of music education. Next is a discussion of music learning theories of several prominent music educators of past decades. Finally, there is consideration of the work of Edwin Gordon, who has done the most extensive contemporary research on music learning. This information helps support the pedagogical aspects of the Suzuki method.

Historical Overview. The roots of Western music education can be found with the ancient Hebrews, who made music an important part of everyone's daily life. Around 500 BC, the Greeks divided higher learning into separate subjects. However, music was still considered important. Plato (427-347 BC) included music as the first basic element of a balanced education, and Aristotle (384-322 BC) declared that even children should learn music. In time, however, music lost academic importance and became reserved

mostly for the wealthy, titled, and those in church service. There it remained for many centuries. Historically, in Western culture, music instruction has been designed mainly for adults. For many years, childhood music education was unheard of.

In their book Musical Growth and Development, Dorothy McDonald and Gene Simons trace the development of music education for children. In 1659 Czechoslovakian educator John Amos Comenius (1592-1670) suggested a curriculum for those in the crucial growth stage—infancy to age six. His curriculum was intended as a “Mother School” to be carried out at home, starting at birth. Mothers were advised to provide a musical foundation by singing to their infants, encouraging their vocalizations, and providing musical toys. His ideas were too radical to be accepted at the time, but the concept of early childhood as a unique stage of development persisted; so did the view that music is an important contributor to moral, physical, and sensory development. McDonald and Simons also mention that French philosopher Jean-Jaques Rousseau (1712-1827), who was himself a musician, proposed music learning for the very young. Like Comenius, Rousseau’s ideas were considered so radical that they were dismissed.

Around 1800 the Swiss educator Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827), who is often credited with the introduction of music into primary schools, recommended that education begin at home, at the “mother’s knee.” Pestalozzi’s program, which also espoused group instruction, included the following teaching principles:

- 1) teaching sound before sign
- 2) teaching by imitation rather than by explanation
- 3) sequential presentation of concepts from simple to complex
- 4) teaching one thing at a time
- 5) repetitious practice to ensure mastery of each step.

It was Pestalozzi’s student, German educator Frederick Froebel (1771-1852), founder of the kindergarten, who placed music at the core of preschool education. He believed that children learn best through self-activity. Froebel also used music to teach other lessons, such as morality and self discipline. The educational theories of Pestalozzi were introduced into American schools in the 1800s, primarily through the efforts of Lowell Mason, who wrote, “The pupil knows not because his teacher or anyone else has told him, and not because he had learned from a book, but because he has heard tones produced by others ... and had himself also produced them” (in Shehan 28). The learning theories of these early educators influenced contemporary music education in America.

Dalcroze, Kodály, and Orff. Three music educators worth noting are Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, Zoltán Kodály, and Carl Orff. Their work is important because all advocate an early start and emphasize the importance of music listening as the basis of music learning. Beth Landis and Polly Carder, authors of The Eclectic Curriculum in American Music Education: Contributions of Dalcroze, Kodály and Orff (1972), describe their theories, which have been used as a foundation for training music educators in Europe, the United States, and other countries.

Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865-1950) was a Swiss musician who believed that the early years are especially important for the development of basic skills and perceptions. He also emphasized that instrumental study should be preceded and accompanied by a rich and varied musical environment, and that a music education should be “based on hearing” (57). The Dalcroze method, often referred to as Eurhythmics, dates back to 1906 and stresses rhythmic movement, ear training, and piano improvisation. Dalcroze recognized that music is not the mathematical division of notes and symbols. Thus he formulated his approach on the belief that music “skills and understandings ... are built on active involvement in musical experience” (9).

The work of Dalcroze is important to Suzuki teachers because of his emphasis on music listening and his use of the piano in the instruction. Also of interest is a curriculum developed by Suzuki educator Joy Yelin for use in group classes, which combines elements of Dalcroze Eurhythmics with the Suzuki repertoire. This curriculum is outlined in her book, Movement That Fits: Dalcroze Eurhythmics and the Suzuki Method (1990).

Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967), Hungarian composer and educator, believed that, to become completely literate, everyone should learn to read and write music the same as one learns to read and write his native language. Like Suzuki, he believed that music study should begin as early as possible because children are most receptive to developing a good ear and musical sensitivity when high quality instruction is provided between the ages of three and seven. Because of Kodály’s influence, Hungarian children often begin musical training in the government’s nursery schools, where children as young as 2½ years of age attend. Suzuki believes, and research shows, that this is possible even earlier.

Kodály had strong opinions about the development of musical taste and gaining a knowledge of one’s national musical heritage. Like Dalcroze, he felt that exposure and listening should serve as readiness for music training. His lessons were carefully planned and systematically arranged according to difficulty, with concentrated practice included at each level. Like Suzuki, Kodály was also concerned with the enrichment of life by means of music, which he regarded as a fundamental right of every human being.

Carl Orff (1895-1982), German composer and educator, agreed with Dalcroze and Kodály that music education should begin early in childhood. The Orff approach, called the Schulwerk, emphasizes creativity and improvisation, and involves learning through exploration. His curriculum begins with simple concepts that progress gradually in a logical sequence. Like Kodály, Orff felt strongly about enculturating children to their national heritage. In the Orff classroom, which is equipped with special instruments adapted for the system, children naturally discover musical concepts by means of traditional songs and games.

Early in his career, Orff was influenced by the movement theories of Dalcroze. Though not especially concerned with methodology, Orff believed that sounds should be taught before symbols, and that instrumental study should begin only after listening and movement skills are in place. These concepts are also advocated by the Suzuki method. However, unlike Suzuki, Orff did not promote specific instrumental instruction.

Like Suzuki, Dalcroze, Kodály, and Orff believed in the natural capabilities of very young children. They also observed that traditional music methods often failed to bring out these natural tendencies. Landis and Carder explain that, in their time and even long afterward, “the traditional method of training musicians concentrated on the intellect to the detriment of the senses, and failed to give students a valid *experience* of the basic elements of music sufficiently early in their studies” (9). Their approaches in fact have been shown to produce more positive attitudes toward music than do traditional methods.

Joy Yelin points out that Suzuki, who studied in Germany from 1920 to 1928, may have been influenced by the theories of Dalcroze, Kodály and Orff. The most notable similarities in their approaches include: the importance of starting young, an emphasis on music listening, sequential presentation of concepts, teaching through experience, and preparing the environment. Contemporary research validates the soundness of these ideas.

Edwin Gordon. In 1964 Benjamin Bloom wrote that researchers considered their understanding of music learning to be inadequate (216). Around that time, Edwin Gordon began his music learning research. Like Dalcroze, Kodály and Orff, he too was interested in discovering the natural sequence of music learning. Gordon’s work is of interest to Suzuki educators because it strongly supports the pedagogical aspects of the Suzuki method.

Gordon’s first major contribution came in 1965 with his Musical Aptitude Profile (MAP) (Boston: Houghton Mifflin), a test designed to help music educators determine the individual needs of their students. However, the MAP was for fourth grade and up. In 1979 he created a test for 5- to 8-year-olds. Ultimately, Gordon realized that he needed to look at a much earlier age group; he has since included infants in his work. Gordon states in his book, A Music Learning Theory for Newborn and Young Children (1990), “one’s potential to learn is never greater than at the moment of birth” (1).

Gordon’s music learning theory. In the course of his more than thirty years of research, Gordon developed a Music Learning Theory which describes his understanding of the natural order of music learning (see Fig. 5 below). Gordon believes that this sequence forms the foundation for appropriate music learning activities.

Fig. 5

Edwin Gordon’s skill learning hierarchy

DISCRIMINATION LEARNING

AURAL/ORAL
 VERBAL ASSOCIATION
 PARTIAL SYNTHESIS
 SYMBOLIC ASSOCIATION
 Reading - Writing
 COMPOSITE SYNTHESIS
 Reading - Writing

INFERENCE LEARNING

GENERALIZATION

Aural/Oral - Verbal - Symbolic

CREATIVITY/IMPROVISATION

Aural/Oral - Symbolic

THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDING

Aural/Oral - Verbal - Symbolic

Source: Edwin Gordon, Learning Sequence and Patterns (Chicago: G.I.A., 1976) 8. Reproduced with permission. All rights reserved.

According to Gordon's theory, all music learning is first perceived aurally. This stage begins informally at birth, or even before, and can take years because a child needs to work through a stage known as "music babble." Gordon likens music babble to language babble. With language, the child first experiments with sounds and is later able to communicate with others. The process depends on informal adult guidance and leads to readiness for formal instruction. Likewise, to develop readiness for music learning, a child needs to experience a rich variety of musical sounds early on in order to work through the "music babble" stage, which begins at birth. Even when formal instruction begins, music listening must predominate over note reading at all levels of learning.

Verbal association means associating names (do re mi, major/minor, etc.) with sounds. At the symbolic level, the student associates notation with names (do re mi, ABC, etc.), and then with corresponding sounds. Both music reading and music writing draw heavily upon skills acquired during early levels and can be mastered quite easily if aural readiness has been properly achieved. If the learning process has been well-sequenced, the student should be able to audiate notation, write familiar songs, and recognize patterns. Audiation, a term coined by Gordon (1977), is the ability to "hear" and comprehend music silently (see APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY).

Inference learning is more complex because in it new patterns are introduced. Here students make conclusions based on all prior learning. This level includes creativity and improvisation, which are developed through experience. Theoretical understanding is to music as grammar is to language, explains Gordon, and should be the final stage of learning. It makes little sense to teach parts of speech before a child can speak and think in a language. Likewise, music rules and symbols have little meaning to a student who has not first developed all other skills. The function of music theory, Gordon emphasizes, should be to explain music, not to create it.

The skill learning levels outlined above are not only progressive; they are hierarchical and cumulative. Each stage forms the basis for the next one. Gordon emphasizes that, although individual timing may vary, these sequential steps must be taken in order for complete musical understanding and mastery to occur.

Other theories. Besides Gordon, other contemporary educators recognize that children's learning occurs in a set sequence. One example is Richard Anderson (1988), Professor of

Piano at Brigham Young University, who believes that all skills and concepts must be taught in a stepwise process. Anderson's outline looks like this (58):

PERCEPTION \Rightarrow EXPERIENCE \Rightarrow INFORMATION \Rightarrow BALANCE

Anderson explains that the brain has two roles in learning: 1) the creative and conceptual; and 2) the analytical, which deals with details such as terminology and symbols. He points out that children naturally learn by imitation and experience. The information comes later as a natural consequence. When pianists read music, they see, hear, and feel the space relationships and contours at the keyboard. The names of the lines, spaces and clefs do not help this process. In fact, presenting the information first can interfere with creativity. Anderson believes that rote learning at the early levels helps build skills quickly and thus provides successful and motivating experiences. Information should be an aid, not the focal point of instruction.

Section Summary. The information in this section is relevant to music teachers because here experts explain how children learn music. Having this knowledge can help educators evaluate teaching methods and provide more effective instruction. For Suzuki teachers in particular, this information is meaningful because it underscores Suzuki's ideas in several important ways:

1. As an aural art, music learning is similar to language learning.
2. It is important to start early.
3. Music listening must be in the environment at all learning levels.
4. Music learning must be taught in logical stages—one step at a time.
5. Reading should be introduced only after basic performance skills are in place.
6. Theoretical understanding is a culmination of all other skills.

Suzuki understood these concepts from careful observation. Their validity has been substantiated with research. The next section presents recent scientific findings that have been reported in the popular press.

Popular Press Reports

Most music learning research has taken place in the last 25 years.² Until very recently, it has been mostly observational. However, brain research has gained credibility and attention, especially in the last ten years, due to fascinating breakthroughs in technology which have revolutionized what we know about learning. For example, computerized scanners and measurement technologies have made it possible to “look” inside the brain, both in cross section and in the thinking process. The topic of early music learning has appeared on the covers of popular news magazines such as Time and Newsweek,³ and in

² In 1960, there were only 2 early childhood music research reports published. In 1971, there were 13; in 1981, there were 24 such studies published (McDonald 38).

³ Key articles: “Music of the Hemispheres,” Discover Mar. 1994; Frances Rauscher, “Can Music Make Us More Intelligent?” Billboard 15 Oct. 1994; Sharon Begley, “Your Child's Brain,”

front page articles of numerous newspapers. It has also been the subject of radio and television news and interviews.

These recent new developments in brain research have caught the attention of important groups. This has led to a new focus on the topic of infant and early childhood learning. For example, President and Mrs. Clinton convened a White House conference of educators and researchers on how the brain works. News of the conference was widely disseminated (see NEA Today, March 1997). The purpose of this section is to report on these latest findings in brain research and explain how they relate to music learning.

One of the first real “scientific” breakthroughs has to do with brain wave studies showing the effect of early musical training on the brain. For many years, musical ability was attributed to the right side of the brain, which tends to process emotions, non-verbal expression, and spatial reasoning. However, early in 1994, the Discover article “Music of the Hemispheres” reported on the work of Gottfried Schlaug and Helmuth Steinmetz of Heinrich Heine University (Düsseldorf, Germany), who found that musical perception is actually divided between the right and left hemispheres in untrained individuals: the right side recognizes melody and intonation; the left, rhythm and notation. However, highly trained musicians tend to use the left hemisphere almost exclusively in playing or listening to music. By means of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) technology, Schlaug and his colleagues compared the brains of musicians with those of nonmusicians. They found that the planum temporale (associated with auditory processing) was bigger in the left hemisphere and smaller in the right hemisphere of the musicians.

The researchers also discovered that trained musicians had a thicker corpus callosum (the nerve bundle interconnecting the left and right brain hemispheres). Musical training seems to result in a migration of skills across the corpus callosum, which helps explain why other learning skills benefit from musical training. This is important because rapid communication between hemispheres is crucial for rapid coordination in certain activities, such as fingering a difficult musical work. Schlaug, an acclaimed organist before entering medical school, further discovered that the effect was 10-15% greater when training started before age seven. He concluded that, rather than being an inherited gift, musical ability is the outcome of many years of training, beginning at an early age.

A related research finding is that the mental mechanisms involved in music processing are also deeply intertwined with the brain’s other basic functions, such as memory, perception, and language. Robert Zatorre, cognitive neuroscientist at Montreal Neurological Institute, found by PET scan that listening to a “real” piece of music engages the entire brain (Shreeve 96).

Perhaps one of the most widely publicized items is the work of psychologist Frances Rauscher and physicist Gordon Shaw, who conducted research at the University of

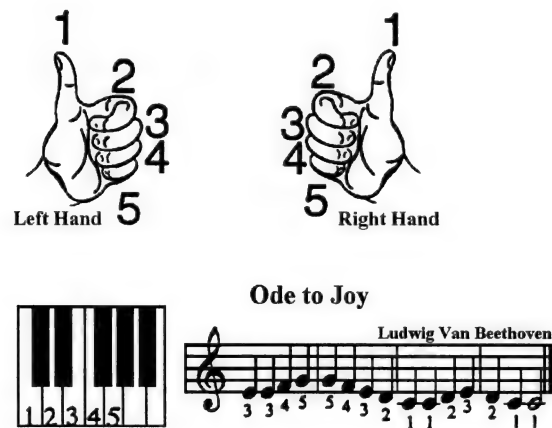
Newsweek 19 Feb. 1996; James Shreeve, “Music of the Hemispheres,” Discover Oct. 1996; Madeleine Nash, “Fertile Minds,” Time 3 Feb. 1977; Sharon Begley, “How to Build a Baby’s Brain,” Newsweek Spring-Summer 1997. For a complete listing, see Selected Bibliographies: Popular Magazine Articles and Newspaper Articles.

California, Irvine. Their experiments are published in scientific journals such as Neuroscience Letters (1995) and Neurological Research (Feb. 1997). In the popular press, almost every article about learning mentions their work. In a Dateline NBC broadcast that aired on September 1, 1994, Rauscher and Shaw discussed the “Mozart effect,” which they identified in Fall of 1993. Shaw and Rauscher found that college students who listened to Mozart’s Sonata for Two Pianos in D major K. 448⁴ for just ten minutes significantly improved spatial reasoning IQ scores. Ten minutes of silence and ten minutes of listening to a relaxation tape did not have the same effect. The effect is only temporary, Rauscher said, because music listening is passive involvement.

To test the effect of active music training, Rauscher and her colleagues brought music lessons to an inner-city day care center. Preschoolers who participated in weekly keyboard instruction for eight months increased their spatial-temporal IQs (the higher brain functions required for math and science) by 46%. Children who received computer keyboard and computer mouse lessons, singing lessons, or no lessons, did not improve.

Fig. 6

Numerical finger association used in the piano keyboard instruction



Source: Frances H. Rauscher, Gordon L. Shaw, Linda J. Levine, Eric L. Wright, Wendy R. Dennis and Robert L. Newcomb, “Music training causes long-term enhancement of preschool children’s spatial-temporal reasoning,” Neurological Research reprint (Feb. 1997) 4. Reproduced with permission. All rights reserved.

The 10-minute private lessons, which were given on electronic keyboards by professional instructors, involved fingering techniques, hands together, pitch intervals,

⁴ In mapping the mathematical patterns neurons make when they fire in the brain, researchers Shaw and Leng found that neurons, which are organized into columns, communicate by means of electrical impulses. By assigning musical tones to neuron columns, they discovered that brain organization results in musical themes. Mozart K. 448 was chosen for the experiments because of its close resemblance to the themes emerging from Shaw and Leng’s computer models (Saari 5).

position changes, sight reading, and playing from memory. Keyboards were chosen because of their linear representation of space relationships between pitches. For the keyboard instruction, Eric Wright, who calls music a “mathematical production” (Rayl, 14), developed a mathematical approach derived from traditional methods in which both the fingers and the keys were assigned a number (See Fig. 6).

The work of Rauscher and others emanated from the earlier work of co-investigator Shaw who, along with former graduate student Xiaodan Leng, created a neuronal model of the cortex. Shaw and Leng proposed that the inherent spatial-temporal neural firing patterns “have the built-in ability to recognize, compare and find relationships among patterns” (Rauscher et al. 2). Musical activity and higher cognitive functions share these firing patterns, which helps explain why musical involvement can enhance spatial-temporal reasoning (Rauscher, Shaw and Ky 44-45). A fundamental property of these neural patterns is that they are strengthened by experience.

Rauscher and Shaw believe that, while anyone can benefit from involvement with music, the younger you start, the better it works. Rauscher said, “Maybe even 2-year-olds would be better than 3-year-olds” (“Perfect Pitch” transcript 15). This is because the brains of younger children are still developing; their cerebral cortexes are very flexible. Reinforcing the importance of teaching music to young children, Lynnell Hancock (1996) boldly stated in a Newsweek article, “If more administrators were tuned into brain research ... music ... would be a daily requirement ... music trains the brain for higher forms of thinking” (58). In the same issue, Sharon Begley (1996) suggested that, although the brain retains its ability to learn throughout life, musical training should begin before kindergarten. According to Joseph Sparling, designer of an early learning project curriculum at University of North Carolina, “You want to say that it is never too late, but there seems to be something very special about the early years” (62).

Some researchers believe that the “Mozart effect” is related to music’s ability to affect our emotions. Psychologist John Sloboda of the University of Keele (England) discovered by interview study that about 90% of people reported similar physical sensations (shivers down the spine or a lump in the throat) from listening to certain music. Moreover, the musical devices eliciting these responses were found to be consistent. Jaak Panksepp, a biopsychologist at Bowling Green State University (Ohio), hypothesizes that musical “chills” may derive from the ability of particular acoustic structures (such as a high-pitched crescendo) to excite regions of the brain designed to respond to infant distress signals (in Shreeve 1996).

In a contrasting point of view, psychologist Mitch Waterman of the University of Leeds (England) feels that musical responses arise, more simply, from our desire to be stimulated. Waterman found that, although emotional reactions tend to be stereotypical, each person’s individual response is unique because people carry into their listening experience “all the complexity and idiosyncrasy of their own lives and personalities” (in Shreeve 100). Waterman explains that the emotions triggered by music are actually “pseudoemotional,” a way to safely stimulate ourselves without the consequences of “real” feeling, thus arousing the brain to a state of “heightened readiness” in which we

are better equipped to deal with our environment in general. While many remain skeptical, the studies give insight into the importance of music in our lives.

Only fifteen years ago, scientists assumed that by the time of birth, brain structure was genetically determined (Begley 1997). However, with the help of new technology, scientists now realize that experiences after birth, rather than genetics, determine the wiring of the brain. One example comes from pediatric neurobiologist Dr. Harry Chugani of Wayne State University (Detroit), who used positron-emission tomography (PET) to measure the electrical activity inside the brains of newborns, and also the continual formation of connections long after birth. Chugani discovered that even the earliest experiences are so powerful that they can completely change the way a person turns out.

Sharon Begley explains, “This all happens so early that the effects of nurture can be perceived as innate nature” (58). While inborn potential may be a gift, it takes years of experience to wire the billions of neural circuits that govern all facets of an individual (language, math, music, emotions, and so on). An interesting outcome of the new findings is that scientists are no longer interested in the question of nature versus nurture. They are now more concerned with studying the way genes and environment interact because they realize that nurture plays a vital role in final outcome, even in the womb.

Carla Shatz of the University of California (Berkeley) explains how it happens. Long before birth, the brain coordinates waves of neural activity, like an autodialer. This electrical activity actually changes the physical structure of the brain. At birth, a baby’s brain contains 100 billion neurons, all it will ever have. Genes determine only its basic wiring—the connections needed to control basic body functions such as heartbeat, breathing, digestion, and so on. In fact, there are roughly 80,000 different genes, at least half of which are believed to be involved with the central nervous system. This small number is only a tiny fraction of the connections the brain actually needs for complete development, including many complex skills such as musical ability. Experiences that supply the signals to strengthen synapses must come from the outside world.

In the first months of life, due to random bombardment from environmental stimuli, the number of brain synapses increases to about 1,000 trillion,⁵ more than an infant can ever use. During the first ten or eleven years of life, the brain eliminates (prunes) unused synapses. The only way to reinforce the desirable synapses is through repeated stimulation. Synaptogenesis (formation of synapses) and pruning (refining) occur at different times in different parts of the brain, resulting in the emergence of various skills. William Greenough of the University of Illinois explains that it is this overproduction followed by pruning that establishes patterns in the brain (Nash 56).

By age two, a child’s brain contains twice as many synapses as the brain of a normal adult. University of Chicago pediatric neurologist Peter Huttonlocher, who measured neuron density by autopsying brains of infants who died unexpectedly, found that the number of synapses per neuron rises from around 2,500 at birth to as many as 18,000 at age six months. While these connections continue to form throughout life, they reach

⁵ 1 quadrillion, or 1,000,000,000,000,000

their highest average densities of 15,000 synapses per neuron at around age two and remain at that level until age ten or eleven (Nash 54). Other research, too, shows that, although people continue learning throughout their lives, the optimum “window of opportunity lasts only until age ten or twelve.” Chugani found that, from four to puberty, the brain’s consumption of glucose, its chief energy source, was twice the adult rate.

Language research further underscores the importance of the early period. Patricia Kuhl of the University of Washington explains that very young babies perceive slight variations in pronunciation as totally different sounds, shown by electrical measurements identifying neuron response to phonemes, or different sounds (Nash 53). But the timing is very fine. Kuhl says that the formation of specific auditory maps for different languages is over by age six months, and “by twelve months, infants have lost the ability to discriminate sounds that are not significant in their language, a child taught a second language after the age of ten or so is unlikely ever to speak it like a native.” Geoffrey Cowley (1997) reasons, “If we learned language in the same way that we learn to add, subtract or play cards, children ... would not get much beyond hello and goodbye” (16). With music, too, the finest differences in sounds are noted within the first six months. This fact underscores the importance of music listening right from the start.

Section Summary. As a result of the new research, scientists now realize that young children are capable of much more than most educators realize. In a Billboard article (15 Oct. 1994), Rauscher lamented the paradoxical position of music in American society. With today’s technology, music has never been more available, but as a school subject it has never been regarded with less esteem. For years, it has been cut from school programs at the expense of the “basics”—reading, writing, math, science. Rauscher, however, insists that music is one of the basics because it serves as a foundation for one of the brain’s higher cognitive functions. Without musical training, “children cannot reach their full potential ... [in] a wide range of professions” (10). This is not a new idea. Over 2,000 years ago, Plato called music “a more potent instrument than any other for education” (Hancock 58).

Begley (1996) points out that most American educators and administrators aren’t aware of the available body of learning research, and are thus not required to know much about learning in order to be certified (59). However, the new insights into brain development have profound implications for parents and educators. According to Esther Thelen of Indiana University at Bloomington, “Experiences in the first year of life lays the basis for networks of neurons that enable us to be smart, creative and adaptable in all the years that follow” (Blakeslee 1997, B21). Frank Newman, president of the Education Commission of the States, adds that, by age three, signs of abuse or neglect are almost impossible to erase. (Nash 51). Betty Hart of the University of Kansas emphasizes, “Since children are constantly building on their prior experiences, attempting to catch up is almost like running after a speeding train” (Phillips 108).

New Research. In addition to studies popularized in the media, other work is going on relating to early music learning. In an important new reference, Musical Beginnings (1996), Irène Deliège and John Sloboda mention studies going on in Europe (Belgium, France, Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom). The emphasis is on auditory

research, starting in utero, musical behavior of school age children, and development of high level ability. Key ideas include: 1) the auditory system is functional 3 to 4 months before birth, and is stimulated by a wide variety of sounds, including speech and music; and 2) young infants naturally become familiarized with music through everyday communication with parents and caregivers. Research on the virtuoso performer found: 1) excellence develops best with challenges the individual seeks for himself; and 2) the balance between enjoyment and discipline should weigh heavily toward enjoyment until about age ten.

The authors also include studies focusing on the perception of time, and practical implications of applying research findings to the educational setting. This new research will be of interest to music educators because educators are generally involved with social and observational studies rather than “hard” research. This is the latest research available and should serve to enlighten those seriously interested in music learning.

Conclusions

At this point we have considered an overview of the literature relating to the Suzuki method in particular, and music learning in general. It is clear that learning research lends strong support to the teaching philosophy and methodology of Shin'ichi Suzuki. The main conclusions reached in this review include the following:

- 1) Talent is ability that must be developed.
- 2) It is important to start musical training very early.
- 3) Musical ability has more to do with environment than with heredity.
- 4) Music learning naturally occurs in a specific, predetermined sequence.
- 5) Active involvement results in maximum understanding.
- 6) Involvement with music has other benefits.

The next chapter describes the components of the Suzuki method in detail.

CHAPTER 3

THE SUZUKI METHOD

As discussed in Chapter 2, the Suzuki method is based on Shin'ichi Suzuki's idea that anyone can learn if the education is right. The purpose of this chapter is to identify the main features of the right education as derived from Suzuki's "mother tongue" philosophy and to apply them to piano teaching. This discussion begins with Suzuki's conclusions about "mother tongue" learning. The rest of the chapter outlines the features of the Suzuki method in detail.

"Mother Tongue" Learning

Suzuki observes that the ability to learn language is consistent in every culture. Not only do children acquire a remarkable vocabulary at a rapid rate,⁶ but they master the nuances of dialect and syntax. This requires high ability and rules out the assumption that some children lack intellect in other areas (such as math, music, art) because language learning, too, is a matter of the intellect. The difference between language learning and other skill learning, Suzuki points out, is that in language, children receive a much more concentrated and consistent education than they do in many other areas.

From these observations of language learning, Suzuki came to the following conclusions about talent development. He considers these points to be the essence of human ability (1969, 11-12):

- a) Human beings are not born with particular talents, but have the potential in which those talents originate.
- b) Potential is something that might be called "seed of talent" which grows by repeated stimulation and training. Learning a language is merely one of those talents.
- c) In language learning, an outstanding teaching method is practiced.
- d) Just as in linguistic ability, if proper training is given under good leadership and in a good environment, any talent will display outstanding ability.
- e) Human potential differs from person to person. It is influenced by inherited physiological factors (or disease) that determine one's intensity of response to the environment. However, even in the case of lesser potential, if that potential is high enough to develop fluent speech, considerable ability should also be expected to grow elsewhere.

⁶ Geoffrey Cowley reported that children have acquired a vocabulary of about 1,000 to 2,000 words by the age of two ("The Language Explosion," Newsweek Spring-Summer 1997).

Suzuki believes that, because only one's potential to develop talent is inborn, what we really need to seek is not inborn talent, but a "method for fostering ability" (1969, 9). The next section describes the features of the Suzuki method in detail.

Features of the Suzuki Method

Suzuki believes that the following conditions are necessary for talent development:

1. "the earlier period"
2. "the better environment"
3. "the better teaching method"
4. "more training"
5. "a superior instructor" (1969, 20).

It is from these conditions that the main features of Suzuki teaching are derived. They include an early start, music listening, parental involvement, preparation of the environment, taking one step at a time, a specific repertoire, music reading, and group lessons. These are discussed next in relation to Suzuki's five points.

1. "The Earlier Period"—Suzuki believes that the "earliest stages of infancy are most critical" (1983, 13).⁷ In the Japanese society there is an historical basis for early education (Bauman 35-6). We have determined already that a child's ability to learn is greatest in the early period, especially from birth to age three. Suzuki points out that those who ask about the best age to start music lessons have already waited too long. To illustrate, Suzuki cites a conversation between Charles Darwin and a mother:

"From what age is it best to educate a child?"
 "How old is your child?"
 "My child is a year and a half."
 "Then you are a year and a half late" (1981, 55).

Suzuki insists that birth is the best time to start because, from the very beginning, a baby is already adapting to its environment by responding to stimuli. By the age of one month, an infant has already received a full month of education. Furthermore, what we really see in a six-year-old is the result of six years of education because we are observing six years of environmental influence.

Early listening. Listening is the most important part of the Suzuki method. It is also the easiest way to start a music education because, through listening, a child unconsciously absorbs the language of music. Suzuki reasons that a baby brought up without any language stimulation will grow up unable to speak (1969, 20). Likewise, music learning will be very difficult if there is no music in the environment. He suggests listening to the Suzuki repertoire as early as three years before lessons begin. The listening environment should also include recordings and concerts by a variety of fine performers.

⁷ See APPENDIX C - TEN REASONS FOR STARTING EARLY.

Listening to performances by other students is also encouraged because it helps motivate students and set goals. Suzuki educator Doris Koppelman gives two examples from her own experience: 1) a two-year-old sister of an older student, who had observed his practicing and lessons, learned on her own to play the first part of “Twinkle A” with good tone and rhythm; and 2) a 1½-year-old boy who has two older sisters learning piano sits at the piano and practices wrist movements. Koppelman points out that early listening and observation can lead to readiness for music lessons at a surprisingly early age.

Early music listening also helps establish preferences. As Suzuki puts it, “what one likes one will do well” (1969, 26). Just as children are not born with a preference for a particular language, they start out with no particular preference for musical style or quality. What they hear in their environment is what they’ll come to prefer and what they will easily learn.

By listening to good quality music, children will develop a good ear. To illustrate, Kataoka writes of one six-year-old child who grew up listening to fine recordings. When this child was given a brand new grand piano, she complained that the new piano was “weird.” Upon investigation, it was learned that the tuner of the piano was inexperienced and did an inferior job—the child could hear that the piano was out of tune (1993, 13).

An early start. There are a number of reasons for starting young. Suzuki educator Cynthia Richards believes that playing an instrument will become a natural part of a child’s life if it is introduced at an early age. Also, because very young children have not yet begun to assert their independence, parents have a greater opportunity to influence their choices. Younger children also have more time to practice because they are involved with fewer activities. This can result in a high level of ability at an age when most traditional students are just starting lessons. A further benefit of an early start is that tension, anxiety and peer pressure are usually not issues with small children. Neither are they concerned with limitations. Most important, the earlier practicing is introduced into the child’s routine, the more likely it is to become an established part of the life. As a result, students who start early are less likely to quit when they are older and have more time conflicts.

2. “The Better Environment”—Suzuki believes that abilities are developed by adaptation to the environment—a superior environment will have the greatest effect in creating superior abilities. Suzuki reasons that if Einstein, Göethe, and Beethoven had been born during the Stone Age, they would have had only the cultural ability and education of that time. Likewise, if a baby born today were to be educated in a society of 5,000 years ago (or any other), “he would adapt to the habits and customs of that society” (1983, 14). To support this idea, Suzuki reports on experiments by Professor N. H. Pronko of Wichita University (Kansas), who noted that babies brought up in different cultures during their first nine months adapted themselves to their particular environments. Qualities not stimulated by each particular environment (both cultural and environmental) did not develop (1983, 14).

The effect of the environment is complex and involves many factors. For the purpose of this discussion, we will consider three main areas: a) the role of the parent; b) the listening environment; and c) the practice environment.

Parental involvement. Suzuki believes that the “fate of a child is in the hands of his parents” (1981, 2). Therefore, with the Suzuki method, the parent is the most important figure in the learning process. In order to be effective, however, parents need to understand the process. Thus a period of observation is recommended before lessons begin. As a further aid to understanding, the parent should read one of Suzuki’s publications, such as Nurtured by Love (1983) or Ability Development from Age Zero (1969).

Ideally, the parent takes the first piano lesson without the child in order to experience working with the teacher. This helps build confidence for working with the child later. Thereafter, the parent attends all lessons, not as disciplinarian, but as observer. With the teacher’s specific suggestions, which can be written in a notebook, the lesson becomes a model for home practice. The teacher may use the parent at the lesson in other ways, for example, in playing duets, or in taking turns with certain exercises. It is beneficial for the parent to learn to play the Book 1 pieces, at least hands separately, and to be involved in listening activities both at home and at the lesson.⁸

At home, the parent is responsible for listening and practice. This is so important because parents have access to the bulk of the child’s time. Contact once a week with a teacher is usually insufficient to motivate a child or to ensure that practice is done correctly. Cynthia Richards emphasizes that children under age seven should not be expected to practice alone. It is true that some children left on their own may succeed, but progress will be slower and they will be more likely to quit when faced with obstacles.

The listening environment. The first element involved with “mother-tongue” education is the environment of sound. Suzuki recommends structuring a listening environment right from infancy.⁹ Because the home is the main source of aural stimulation, beautiful music must be made a part of family life. Suzuki piano teacher Doris Koppelman (1987) points out that, just as with language, when music is heard regularly, the listener becomes aware of the nuances of touch, phrasing and style, not just the notes and rhythm.

In addition to a variety of high quality music, Suzuki recommends choosing one piece (about 5 minutes long) for daily listening. This will help the development of specific “music memory” (Koppelman 16). Before long, the baby will demonstrate a facial and bodily response upon hearing the piece. The same effect is also possible from hearing older siblings practice. Suzuki tells of a five-month-old baby girl for whom he performed two pieces. When he played an unfamiliar Bach minuet, she seemed pleased and curious.

⁸ See APPENDIX D: HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD AT HOME and APPENDIX E: HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD AT THE LESSON.

⁹ See APPENDIX F: BUILDING A LISTENING LIBRARY.

But upon hearing him play the Vivaldi A-minor Concerto, which her older sister had been practicing, the baby became excited and moved in rhythm to the music (1983, 7).

The Suzuki repertoire is available on cassette or compact disc and should be played daily. Suggested playing times include during meals, at bedtime or quiet play, and while in the car. In addition to playing the entire recording, specific listening may be recommended by the teacher for working on a particular piece. Concentrated listening can help prevent poor playing habits that can be difficult to change later.

Besides being an aid to learning the Suzuki repertoire, music listening is an important teaching aid. Because children learn naturally by imitation, the teacher can demonstrate exactly the correct posture, touch, and articulation. Demonstration and imitation at the lesson are ideal for solving musical problems and for ear training because the student learns from discovery.

Fig. 7

Two examples of correct posture and seating



1.



2.

1. Source: Doris Koppelman, Introducing Suzuki Piano (San Diego: Dichter Press, 1978) 56. Reproduced with permission. All rights reserved.
2. Source: Carole L. Bigler and Valery Lloyd-Watts, Studying Suzuki Piano: More than Music (Summy-Birchard, 1979) 72. Reproduced with permission. All rights reserved.

The practice environment. Suzuki emphasizes the fact that ability develops through practice. Careful attention should be given to the practice environment because it will influence the quality of practice. A child should have a place to practice that is free from distractions and interruptions, such as television, noise, or conversation.

Another important consideration is the instrument. A fine piano can be a significant motivating factor. It should be well tuned and kept in good condition. It is also important to adjust seating height and use a footrest to accommodate the child's size and growth. See Fig. 7 for two examples of correct posture and seating.

Suzuki educators recommend the following guidelines for practice:

a) Make practice a regular routine. Suzuki recommends, "practice only on the days you eat" (Koppelman 28). This may sound humorous, but it's true that a structured routine actually improves motivation. It is the parent's responsibility to establish a regular practice routine. Since most is accomplished when the child is rested and comfortable, care should be taken in deciding on a schedule. Involving the child in the scheduling process further provides the positive experience of making choices.

b) How much time? The goal should be better practice, not more practice. Suzuki says that three minutes with love is good practice (Koppelman 27). In the beginning, several short sessions may be better than one long one. The amount of time will need to be adjusted periodically, perhaps even daily. Thirty minutes may be too long for a very young student, but not long enough for one more advanced. To prevent unpleasant associations, it is advisable to be sensitive to the child's attention span, which can vary from day to day. Suzuki advises, "stop when the child yawns" (1969, 27).

c) Set practice goals. The basic goal should be to improve a skill. It is best to work on only one point at a time because working on small sections is more efficient and manageable. The teacher can guide the practice routine by giving specific assignments. Suzuki teacher Mary Craig Powell recommends the following typical practice session:

- Review. Something familiar makes more difficult work less overwhelming.
- Warm-up. "Twinkle" Variations (Book 1) or scales make good practice start-ups.
- Reading. Spend about one-third of the practice time here.
- New material. About one-third of the practice time should be new music.
- Review. Let some be the child's choice.

d) Praise and motivation. Children need encouragement. Therefore, a positive parent-child relationship is critical. Cynthia Richards admits that practicing with a child probably requires better parenting skills than any other joint activity. It takes ingenuity and creativity to keep a young child interested day after day. What works today may not fit the child's needs tomorrow. It also takes patience, self control, and skill in handling a child's immature ways. However, the reward

is well worth the effort of seeking out ways to motivate the child and to prevent emotional upsets. Because children learn through play, music learning should be a positive experience. Perhaps the most important thing a parent can do is to enjoy the child's music. William and Constance Starr (1983) believe that, if one enjoys each step of the learning process, patience may not be necessary.

3. "The Better Teaching Method"—Suzuki believes that, just as one learns to speak before learning to read, a child learns to use the language of music before reading it. Music reading, a natural outgrowth of the process, will be more musical and theoretical understanding will be easier when this process is followed. This section deals with the pedagogical aspects of the Suzuki method.

One step at a time. Suzuki says, "From the beginning, each step must be ... thoroughly mastered" (Koppelman 45). Mastery is accomplished by securing each basic skill before proceeding to the next.¹⁰ Specific assignments consist of small sections. Secure playing comes from thorough mastery of each step. It is a cumulative process that builds confidence and self esteem by ensuring success at each level.

Reading. A good Suzuki teacher values the skill of music reading. However, just as one learns to speak before reading, a child should learn to use the language of music before reading it. For example, a child enters first grade with a large vocabulary and minimal reading skills. Reading skills catch up to the vocabulary in five to ten years (Powell 7). The ability to read music progresses in a similar way. With the Suzuki method, music reading is introduced after the skills of music listening and performance are in place.

Kataoka (1985) asserts that reading is useless when taught separately from the performance context. Therefore, reading concepts, such as fingerings, clef orientation, time signatures, and notation patterns, are gradually introduced according to the student's readiness. An important step toward reading includes review of a memorized piece while looking at the notation. Careful attention should be given to choosing reading materials that progress logically and reinforce each concept. Sight reading, when appropriate, should include notes and rhythms, time and key signatures, dynamics and phrasing.

The skills acquired from studying the Suzuki repertoire can be applied to any style of music and are easily learned if the music is included in the listening "vocabulary." Suggestions include jazz, folk songs, popular music, and keyboard music from all periods of music history. Because performance skills are usually ahead of reading skills, music reading will usually transfer to the Suzuki repertoire around Book 3.

Repertoire. The selection and order of the Suzuki repertoire is conceived as a foundation for presenting the basic skills of performance. Suzuki instruction begins with a set of Variations on "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." Suzuki educator Mary Craig Powell (1988) points out that these variations form the basis of technical development. They introduce the student to various rhythms, staccato and legato technique, and basic phrasing and form. They also serve as exercise for developing finger movement, stable

¹⁰ See APPENDIX G: BASIC SKILL LIST.

wrists, and relaxed arms. The other pieces in Book 1 are folk songs and short classical pieces through which the student is introduced to many of the musical concepts that will later be found at all levels.¹¹ The pieces in all seven volumes of Suzuki Piano School are taken mostly from the Classical and Baroque literature.

4. “More Training”—Suzuki says, “Ability is fostered through training” (1969, 30). The more thorough the training, the more will be accomplished. Suzuki reasons, “If you compare a person who practices five minutes a day with one who practices three hours, the difference is enormous even though they both practice daily. ... What one accomplishes in three months will take the other nine years” (Bigler & Watts 27). Of course, the longer time period must be built up gradually, but Suzuki’s point is well made. Careful attention to the quality of practice enables the concentration level to increase.

Repetition. Suzuki believes that ability develops through repetition. “Ability and habit are closely related. Only within habit does ability grow” (1969, 23). To emphasize the importance of repetition, he recommends “ten thousand times” (Powell 21). Since ability accumulates through correct repetition, practice should be goal-oriented and specific. Careless repetition is useless because it only reinforces bad habits. By learning to repeat to the point of mastery, the student develops persistence in skill learning.

To illustrate the effect of repetition, Suzuki uses the example of right- or left-handedness. He believes that being ambidextrous is ideal, and that we ourselves have brought about our right- or left-handedness through repetition. “The two hands would be the same if we habitually trained them equally from the beginning” (1983, 42). This would be very efficient, he explains, and for piano playing, it would be good for both hands to play with the same power (1981, 51).

Jane Healy reasons that, to a young child, repetition is not boring because the brain needs many repetitions to acquire a skill. When adults perceive certain types of repetition as boring, it is because they are at a different level of learning. Children need the opportunity to experience the process for themselves.

Review. Suzuki says ability is raised with review of pieces learned. Review should have a two-fold purpose: a) a specific goal; and b) maintaining the repertoire. With language, when a child learns a new word, all others are not forgotten. Rather, they are practiced until they are a natural part of the vocabulary. Psychologists call this overlearning (Singer 1972) and emphasize that it is an important part of the learning process. With the Suzuki method, the repertoire is continually maintained while new pieces are added. If review is done with excellence as a goal, it becomes a cumulative process by which existing skills are strengthened, new skills are gained, and playing becomes more beautiful and natural. Suzuki advises, “Don’t stop practicing a passage until you can play it well three times in succession” (Starr 29). Doing this is a good indicator of retention, and shows the importance of correct repetition.

¹¹ See APPENDIX H: BUILDING BLOCKS FOR MUSICAL ABILITY and APPENDIX I: “TWINKLE” BASICS.

5. “A Superior Instructor”—Suzuki says that a good instructor is critical to the learning process. Doris Koppelman emphasizes that it takes serious training to learn the teaching techniques of the Suzuki method because it differs from the way most teachers were taught. The Suzuki method encompasses a whole philosophy of education as well as a technical approach specific to each instrument. Therefore, Suzuki teachers must become familiar with all aspects of the approach.¹²

Teacher training. Because the Suzuki method differs from traditional approaches, careful attention should be given to teacher training.¹³ Doris Koppelman recommends attending as many courses, workshops and institutes as possible before beginning Suzuki teaching. Teachers also need to continually update their skills. Observing experienced teachers with their own students is an excellent way to continue training. In this setting, the observer can see various stages of learning, lesson organization, and teacher communication with parents.

An indispensable aspect of teacher training is learning to play the pieces in the Suzuki repertoire. Each piece lends itself to particular aspects of piano playing and should be learned in the same way we would teach it to a student. Self-study of the repertoire is a continuous process that becomes more refined with teaching experience. By skillfully examining the repertoire, the teacher can decide which musical abilities need to be developed in each piece, and how musical goals can be accomplished.

Parent-teacher communication. Because the Suzuki approach involves so much that is new to most parents, Suzuki teachers must be aware of their responsibility to prepare parents before lessons begin. Parents need to understand both the basic philosophy and the teaching approach. The teacher should inform parents of key publications and make them readily available. Part of parent preparation should also include observation of other students’ lessons for several weeks. In this way, both parent and child learn what comprises a lesson and what will be expected from both at lessons.

The teacher must explain the parent’s responsibility for music listening, lesson attendance and home practice. Parent orientation should include a demonstration of the “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” Variations, which not only establish the fundamentals of technique, but also set the pattern for listening and practice. The teacher cannot assume that the parent understands exactly how to practice, so the good teacher will be careful to communicate specific instructions and be sensitive to the individual needs of each student.

The lessons. Suzuki says that the first lessons are the most important. Careful attention should be given at the beginning to teaching only one point at a time. It is the teacher’s responsibility to make sure the student hears and understands exactly how to do what is asked. Therefore, one of the first skills a student needs to learn is concentration. The teacher must demonstrate how to practice a point, and be sure that the student can carry out the assignment correctly several times before leaving the lesson.

¹² See APPENDIX J: RECOMMENDED READINGS FOR SUZUKI TEACHERS.

¹³ For teacher training locations and other information, see APPENDIX K: SUZUKI ORGANIZATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS.

Piano pieces are learned from memory, one hand at a time. At the lesson, the teacher can point out fingerings and other markings in the score so the parent can help at home. Dividing the music into parts can aid memory and also helps teach musical form.

Motivation. Emphasis on positive reinforcement is stressed by the Suzuki method. A good teacher must have an attitude of love, support, and encouragement for the child. When the child plays for the teacher, praise should be given before any correction is given. William Hargrove (1992) of the Idaho Board of Education says that the principal ingredients in learning to play a musical instrument are discipline and enthusiasm. Since successful practice involves repetition, it is important to make it fun. Motivational ideas can include giving the student assignment sheets, charts, games, and stars or stickers.

Group lessons. Group lessons are used to reinforce listening skills, and to provide frequent performance opportunities that help motivate and build confidence. Although groups are structured in different ways by different teachers, they usually combine performances with some type of enrichment, such as theory games and ensemble playing.

Summary

The Suzuki approach is based on the philosophy that all children can learn. Instruction begins informally at birth (or earlier) by preparing the environment, which first includes home music listening, and later observing the lessons of others. With this good foundation, a child may be ready for formal instruction at a very early age, perhaps at age three or earlier. The parent is a key figure in the process. From a pedagogical standpoint, music learning progresses from listening to performing to reading.

It is important to realize that Suzuki teachers are not the only ones who have access to the teaching principles outlined in this chapter. Suzuki educator Laurie Scott (1992) points out that the actual "methodology" of Suzuki instruction is basic to what is commonly considered "good teaching." Sequencing of skills, mastery of each step, and use of reinforcement and modeling are all elements used in other teaching situations. Suzuki points out that, since differences in these conditions are mostly responsible for different levels of ability, this "good teaching" seems to fit well with the Suzuki philosophical premise that "every child can learn" (233-4).

CHAPTER 4

LOOKING AT THE PARALLELS

At this point we have considered background material that will support the Suzuki method as a pedagogically sound music teaching approach. Chapter 2 reviewed literature relevant to Suzuki teaching and music learning research. Chapter 3 discussed the teaching features of the Suzuki piano method. Chapter 4 recapitulates this previously covered material. However, here the information is organized to help the reader see how research findings support the Suzuki teaching philosophy and methodology. Each concept is supported by comments from researchers and educators.

“Mother Tongue” Learning

It has been stated earlier in this thesis that Suzuki recognized the natural way to foster musical talent in “the teaching method of language” (1969, 19). Other educators and researchers have used this analogy (Greenburgh 1976; Gardner 1982; Jellison 1982; Healy 1987; Anderson 1988; Hodges 1989; McDonald and Simons 1989; Glover 1990; Gordon 1990; Andress 1992; Hoffman 1992). McDonald and Simons point out that many music methods liken music phrasing to sentence structure in language. Gordon mentions music babble, a necessary stage in music learning, as being similar to language learning.

Glover points out that, as with language learning, musical understanding develops through use. The same encouragement and rich environment we give to children in language learning should be employed to help them secure a music foundation. Hoffman, who sees the language learning process as a key to learning, observes, “the growth of language is a continuous process ... [involving] children as active participants ... rather than passive bystanders, and is aided by an environment that is geared toward children’s ways of learning” (9). He believes that music learning should follow the same procedure.

Some researchers feel that music actually assists language learning. Judith Jellison (1982) reports on a study in which musicians performed significantly better in recalling sequenced verbal material than nonmusicians. She relates this ability to the analogy between music and speech—especially their common use of pitch, loudness and time.

Gardner observes that in a baby’s early attempts at speech, language and music chanting are inseparably linked. Hodges writes that “motherese,” the baby talk mothers use with their infants, is composed mainly of musical elements. Even though music and language use different neural pathways, he explains, it is the musical elements (contour, timbre, rhythm) that communicate emotions, and these are understood long before actual words. According to Healy, when babies respond to sound, auditory pathways are built in a way that will help develop language areas. These pathways, which continue to develop until somewhere between the ages of seven and ten, require a variety of sound in the environment—both speech and music—even before birth.

Talent Development

Suzuki believes that language is only one of many talents that can be developed. Literature relating to music learning supports the view that talent is developed ability (Michel 1973; Critchley and Henson 1980; Hodges 1981; Shuter-Dyson 1981; Gardner 1983; Healy 1987; Bloom 1985; Simons 1986; Peery 1987; Gordon 1990; Sosniak 1990; Colin 1994). Studies repeatedly show that a musical environment is a critical factor in the development of musical talent. Michel observed that musical experiences in the first years of life are the most important. Simons cites research demonstrating the significance of environmental factors on musical development. He lists the following important environmental variables: music listening, family interest and participation, and parental help. According to Gordon, who believes that everyone is born with potential to achieve in music, favorable early experiences actually help maintain one's level of inborn potential. Similarly, Fowler believes that exceptional talent can be developed by the "earliness, intensity, persistence, regularity, family concentration, and tutorial approach" (in Peery 1969, 11). Peery concluded that the differences between musically talented children and nonmusical children lie not in differences of innate ability, but in differences of opportunity and encouragement in the child's home environment.

The idea that every human being is born with the capacity to achieve in music is also supported by contemporary research (Andress 1973; Gardner 1983; Bloom 1985; Healy 1987; Anderson 1988; Hodges 1989; Gordon 1990; Fox 1991; Colin 1994). For example, Gardner points out that the "song qualities" of speech are more prominent in the first year than more focused aspects of communication. He believes that, because this is true with all children, all humans are born with musical potential. Similarly, Fox has found support for the idea that "musical ability is present in all human beings" ("Music, Development" 42). During the first years of life, according to many researchers, all children are capable of developing musical intelligence and ability. Anderson observes, "Children are the most natural musicians in the world. They need only be taught in a natural way" (59). Some studies have shown that musical potential can be developed even in handicapped people, including some hearing impaired, in spite of other weaknesses or difficulties (Williams 1989; Critchton 1992).

Sosniak (1990) notes that it is common to try to predict as soon as possible which children are most likely to succeed and to plan their education based on early signs. However, she feels that this is incompatible with the findings of Bloom, who concluded that, of the 25 pianists he surveyed, it would have been impossible to predict their eventual success based on early signs. Gardner, who recognized that a large percentage of Suzuki-trained students learn to play well at a young age, admits that talent development is possible with a much larger proportion of the general population than is currently the case. Similarly, Bloom concluded from his talent study that what anyone can learn, 95% of all people can learn if given the same opportunity and training.

Next we shall turn to Suzuki's five points for talent development.

Features of the Suzuki Method

Suzuki believes that anyone can develop superior abilities with the right training. This section points to research that supports Suzuki's five conditions necessary for talent development. In review, these include: "1) the earlier period; 2) the better environment; 3) the better teaching method; 4) more training; 5) a superior instructor" (1969, 20).

1. "The Earlier Period"—Music learning researchers generally agree with Suzuki's recommendation that music training should begin at birth if possible. The early years are the time when concepts are most easily grasped and when the basis for learning is set for life.

An early start. Musical experiences children have in the first five or six years can affect all their future music learning. Kodály felt that music training should come at the same time as language learning. Numerous researchers have found that babies respond to music in utero (Michel 1973; Moog 1976; Shuter-Dyson 1981; Cohen 1986; Fox 1989; Scott 1989; Colin 1994; Weinberger 1994; Deliège and Sloboda 1996). In this sense, music education starts even before birth. Fox found that premature babies with other limitations were able to respond to music. She reasons that only by studying the earliest period can researchers determine how much of musical ability is inborn. Shuter-Dyson believes that the earliest years are most important for learning basic music skills—rhythm, melody, patterns, intervals. Robinson discovered that children younger than 4½ years of age seemed to benefit more from rhythmic training than did older students.

We have considered the importance of the early years for aptitude development. Most experts also believe that musical experiences early in life can help identify those with high potential (Andress 1973; Michel 1973; Moog 1976; Gardner 1983; Healy 1987; Scott 1989; Gordon 1990; Fox 1991; Robinson 1994). Coulter emphasizes the importance of the growth spurt of the frontal lobes of the brain. This area, which is necessary for language acquisition, pattern recognition, and regulation of motor behavior, is stimulated by rhythmic activity, and is most sensitive to development between ages 1½ and 5 (in Robinson 1994).

Early music listening. Music learning researchers generally agree that, because music listening forms the foundation for music learning, it should be the most important consideration in music education (Greenberg 1976; Critchley and Henson 1980; Peters and Miller 1982; Bloom 1985; Peery 1987; Trehub 1987; McDonald and Simons 1989; Allman 1990; Gordon 1990; Shuter-Dyson 1990). As Greenberg says, "listening is the basis of all experience in music and is at the core of all efforts to educate the child musically" (73). Similarly, Gordon believes that technical problems have their source in listening. Bloom found in his survey of concert pianists that music in the home during the early years was an important factor in the development of these professional musicians.

Music listening not only speeds up learning, but is a critical factor in establishing preferences. Allman reports on preference research showing that the "wiring up of the

brain's musical knowledge begins very early in life" and is culture specific (60). Shuter-Dyson emphasizes that this musical enculturation begins with the home environment.

According to experts, Suzuki's recommendation to include classical music in an infant's listening environment is a valid one. Peery, for example, found that "training in classical music decreases the likelihood that one will be satisfied with stimulation by less complex musical forms, and increases the probability of preferring classical music" (19). Studies also support the idea that listening to fine music helps children develop a good ear. Experiments by Trehub suggest that even infants can recognize differences in tonalities, melodic patterns, and the presence of wrong notes in melodies.

2. "The Better Environment"—It is not difficult to find support for Suzuki's belief that abilities are developed by adaptation to the environment (Bloom 1964; Moog 1976; Shuter-Dyson 1979; Brand 1986; Cohen 1986; Healy 1987; McDonald and Simons 1989; Howe and Sloboda 1991; Webster 1991; Hoffman 1992). According to McDonald and Simons, "Musical children are the products of musical environments" (75). Likewise, Shuter-Dyson reports a strong relationship between music at home and musical achievement of 5- and 6-year-olds. Moog found that these differences in achievement showed up as early as age three. Lenz found that subjects from a musical home background scored higher in music discrimination tests than those from a less musical environment (in Tanner 1981).

While it is true that both genetic and environmental factors contribute to a child's development, research shows that the conditions for development rest far more in environment than with genetic makeup. Bloom determined from his studies of siblings that even identical twins varied in general intelligence and other aptitudes when raised in separate environments. In examining the family backgrounds and listening habits of 42 accomplished music students, Howe and Sloboda found that musical accomplishment was not a coincidence of birth—all 42 families were continually involved with music. Regular practice was accepted as the norm. It is these environmental differences that account for developmental differences in children of the same chronological age. As Webster reasons, what is not in the environment cannot be developed.

Parental involvement. Considerable research shows the importance of parental involvement to student progress (Kingsley 1946; Lawrence and Dachinger 1967; Bloom 1985; Anderson 1988; Healy 1987; Peery 1987; Fox 1991; Zdzinski 1992). Kingsley points out that skill learning involves goal-setting and foresight. Kataoka explains that, due to their immaturity and lack of experience, children can't set such goals because they have no frame of reference to foresee future consequences. According to Anderson, although the teacher identifies the goals, the greatest help can and should come from the parents. Elizabeth Bedsole feels that parents should be involved in the music education process as much as possible because "home environment has a greater effect on the child's musical ability than maturation" (in Shuter-Dyson 1990, 86). Zdzinski noted that the effects of parental involvement are most notable when training is started early. He believes that parental involvement is a major contributing factor to the success of Suzuki students.

In a questionnaire survey designed to determine the factors relating to carryover of music training into adult life, Lawrence and Dachinger discovered that two-thirds of the respondents gave their children music lessons because “children need guidance and ... such important decisions cannot be left to them” (29). Bloom points out that all the subjects in his 1985 talent study had come from families who were interested in music. Although their level of involvement varied greatly, the common factor was the parents’ level of commitment and willingness to give their children the best possible conditions. Likewise, Peery concluded that neither schools nor private lessons are likely to be as influential on talent development as parental influence and a consistent environment.

Practice environment. Several researchers have commented about the importance of the practice environment, which includes the condition of the instrument (Gardner 1983; Randall 1986; Healy 1987; McDonald and Simons 1989; Hoffman 1992). According to Randall, “There is no quicker way to kill a child’s enthusiasm for music than by giving him a low quality instrument on which to learn” (810).

A prominent feature of the Suzuki Violin School is the sizing of the violins, which are very small for the youngest students. As the child grows, he receives a larger violin. The Suzuki Piano School utilizes a similar concept for piano study by means of adjustable seating and the use of a footrest. It is interesting to note that, while several articles mentioned instrument size as a consideration in choosing an instrument for early study, I found no references recommending the use of adjustable piano equipment to accommodate the child’s size and growth. This is critical, however, to the formation of early habits. Poor posture and hand problems, some of the easiest bad habits to prevent, are very difficult to change later.

3. “The Better Teaching Method”—Suzuki believes that, just as with language learning, basic music learning skills progress from listening to performance to reading to theoretical understanding. Music learning researchers and theorists generally agree that the natural sequence of music learning progresses in a specific order, which is the same for all people. The better teaching method should follow this sequence (Robb 1972; Michel 1973; Gordon 1977; Shuter-Dyson 1981; Healy 1987; Anderson, 1988; Hoffman 1992). For example, Michel recommends a “revolution in teaching methodology ... [to] teach the right thing at the right time” (19). Historical examples include the writings of Pestalozzi, Dalcroze, Kodály, and Orff, who all emphasized proper sequencing of music learning.

Most music learning researchers agree that music learning should not begin with note reading. George Kochevitsky wrote in his book, The Art of Piano Playing (1967), “In the initial period of study, the pupil should concentrate on tone production ... The introduction of note signs as symbols of things already experienced comes later” (31). Gordon places listening at the basis of all musical understanding. Basic performance skills are next; music reading comes later, with theory as the final stage of learning. Healy explains that music reading is inappropriate for young children because it combines demands on integration of visual, auditory and motor patterns for which most preschoolers’ brains are not equipped. In summary, Anderson reasons, “it is no more

necessary to know terminology and symbols to play music than it is to know which words are nouns, verbs, or adjectives in order to speak” (59).

4. “More Training”—The importance of active music making, including repetition for skill development, has been observed for centuries. For example, Aristotle said children should learn by doing. Dalcroze, Kodály, and Orff, too, believed that music skills are built by active involvement and repetitious reinforcement of concepts. More recently, in an interview study designed to determine the factors relating to musical skill development, Howe and Sloboda (1991) found that “expertise did not emerge ... unsupported by a regime of regular activity” (52).

Most music educators agree that the basic practice goal should be to improve a skill, not to pass time. Baxter (1981) explains that practice is “a trial-and-error attempt at a specific outcome. The more trials attempted, the greater the likelihood that success will occur” (12). While it is true that one’s first attempts may be less than successful, it is the number of correct repetitions that will increase the chances of success. Therefore, Baxter recommends a good teacher-model for correct practice.

Repetition is also an important factor in the establishment of music preferences. It was not difficult to find agreement with this viewpoint (Robertson 1958; Bradley 1971; Michel 1973; Moog 1976; Peery 1987; Allman 1990; Gordon 1990). Robertson calls repetition “a very useful pedagogical routine in any serious listening program” (298). Allman explains, “Appreciation of any style of music very much depends on the brain being able to glean overall patterns from repeated listening” (60).

5. “A Superior Instructor”—With the Suzuki method, the teacher takes responsibility for the child’s learning by carefully researching teaching techniques, educating the parent, and communicating specific instructions. Here, too, we find supporting research (Kochevitsky 1967; Lawrence and Dachinger 1967; Baxter 1981; Healy 1987; McDonald and Simons 1989; Glover 1990; Fox 1991; Andress 1992; Hoffman 1992; Scott 1989). The kind of group lessons used by Suzuki teachers also find support in research literature, both for performance opportunities and for motivation. In the group situation children can also learn from one another.

Andress agrees that it is the teacher’s responsibility to prepare the musical environment, both physically and psychologically. Westney agrees that the most helpful lessons are those that show students how to learn and how to solve problems (in Crouch 1994). The skills of the teacher make this possible. Lawrence and Dachinger found in their interview survey that lack of good teaching skills is widespread. Poor teaching, they determined, was the cause of many children ending their lessons.

Healy recommends caution in finding an instructor who understands the needs of the very young (291). Glover, however, points out that many [music] teachers have little background [in] ... assessing children’s musical understanding” (257). She feels that, in order to be effective, teachers must develop skills of understanding and interacting with children in order to motivate them. McDonald and Simons emphasize that effective teachers need to understand children as well as music. They also need to constantly be

willing to adjust their lessons and attitudes to the changing needs of their students. In answer to this concern, the Suzuki method offers an organized teacher training program for continuously improving teaching skills.

Summary

The comparisons presented in Chapter 4 show that contemporary research supports the Suzuki teaching philosophy and methodology. Summarizing the Suzuki method, Irène Deliège and John Sloboda, authors of Musical Beginnings (1996), write:

“Shin’ichi Suzuki ... used the model of intuitive parental didactics in his programme which he termed the ‘Mother tongue method of music education.’ ... According to Suzuki, all children have natural predispositions for both speech and music, and should learn music early and as naturally as they learn how to speak. They should first play an instrument and then read music as they first speak and only later learn writing. Parents should participate with encouragement, emotional encouragement, and support” (108).

Other writers and researchers have commented on the good results achieved with Suzuki training (Ibuka 1977; Gardner 1983; McDonald and Simons 1989; Gordon 1990). Chapter 5 will focus on the results of a field study focusing on Suzuki teachers and students carried out by the author of this thesis.

CHAPTER 5

THE FIELD TEST

In order to enhance the knowledge gained from research, I interviewed people I could meet with and observe personally. The study was started on July 29, 1997, and concluded February 13, 1998. The focus of this six-month survey was on the effectiveness of the Suzuki method as reported by actual teachers and parents of students.

Methods

In the survey, I interviewed 5 Suzuki piano teachers and 16 parents representing 22 individuals who have been studying piano with the Suzuki method for one to ten years. In order to get a broad spectrum of responses, I contacted teachers and families from several parts of the United States. In this way, success would not appear to be the result of regional influences, or of one teacher's good teaching qualities. Subjects were chosen at random and did not know in advance that they would be interviewed. In families with several children, the "featured" child just happened to be the one taking the lesson when the parent was approached for the interview. In some cases, more than one child was included in a parent's responses. I was also able to observe most of the children's lessons. All teachers were interviewed by phone.

Parents were taken aside during the child's lesson (three of the parents were interviewed by phone). They did not personally know me (the interviewer). None of the parents or teachers had advance access to the interview questions, nor did they have a chance to share their interview experience with others. For integrity of reporting, all interviews were used. I did not screen out anyone who didn't give the "right answers," and I did not edit any of the interviews.¹⁴

Discussion

Interview questions were designed with the goal of determining the soundness and effectiveness of Suzuki teaching. I especially wanted to determine which teaching conditions and techniques were responsible for the success of Suzuki students. The questions included the following topics: starting at a young age, music listening, home environment, parental involvement, practice, and motivation. I was also interested in finding any early signs of high musical potential. Also, I wished to investigate the validity of the Suzuki philosophical basis—the belief that all children can learn.

From the information considered in this thesis, we would expect that individuals involved with the Suzuki method who are experiencing a measure of success are

¹⁴ The complete interviews are recorded in APPENDIX L: INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS and APPENDIX M: INTERVIEWS WITH PARENTS.

utilizing, to a reasonable extent, the techniques and features discussed earlier. According to music learning research, we now know that it is important to start young and that the parent should be involved in the process. Music listening from an early age, as well as the qualities of the teacher, have been found to make a difference. Research also suggests that the benefits of music study transfer into other areas of life. The responses showed how these elements work in a real setting. The results produced by the Suzuki method in the subjects of this study match the predicted outcome based on research studies from the literature review in Chapter 2.

Parents agreed that it is important to start young, especially for “getting into the pattern of practicing, the routine. [Children are] maybe a little more respectful to their parents at that point” (Peter, Elizabeth).¹⁵ “Older children are less receptive to your making the choice” (Katie). One parent believes that, when they start lessons at about 4 or 5, “They get used to practicing every day” (Lara). “The greatest benefit is to learn to stick with something that turns out no be not so much fun after awhile” (Mikey). One mother, however, did admit to not having the patience to work with a child younger than age 5.

Not one of the subjects in this study was a prodigy. Almost all parents reported that they did not start lessons because they thought their child had high potential. In one case (Lina), lessons were started because, at age 3½, the child quickly learned to play a melody she was shown at the piano. Another (Julianna) asked for lessons at age 3½, but did not begin until age 5. However, this was not the case with most respondents. One child, in fact, took five years to finish Book 1 (Katie). Another discovered her talent “in the course of the lessons” (Theodora). Others said they had no way of knowing the child’s musical potential since there was no piano in the home before beginning lessons.

All subjects who had previous experience with traditional methods were much more satisfied with their Suzuki experience. One student who transferred to a Suzuki teacher felt that her traditional lessons had been a waste (Lara). Others had siblings who had transferred from traditional teachers, or who had dropped out from piano altogether because of a bad traditional experience. One parent observed, “Traditional kids weren’t at ease or able to use their ears much ... It took about six months to undo the tight fingers and the hunched over posture and poor technique” (Patrick). This not to say that all traditional teachers are bad. Rather, it is a reporting on what I encountered in this study.

Music listening was considered a critical factor by all parents. One parent observed, “It’s going to be awfully hard if they’ve certainly never heard a piece” (Allyson, Noah). “I think it’s very important for them to know what the music is to sound like” (Wesley, Taylor, Daniel). The most successful listening program, and also the easiest to implement, was getting into the habit of turning on the tape first thing in the morning and any time the children were in the car or at play.

Parents generally agreed that without their help, the child would not have made it. “I find that, when the parent is involved, the child gets more interested with the practice” (Amaris, Mathieu). “I don’t believe she would have learned anything if I just sent her off

¹⁵ Parenthetical names refer to the children who are subjects of the interviews found in APPENDIX M. For reference, see INDEX TO INTERVIEWS.

to practice” (Theodora). “When they’re little, it just totally makes sense that they’re going to do better if you’re sitting next to them and if you’re reminding them ... logically, it makes no sense to not sit there with them until they’re older” (Patrick).

Most parents found that a regular routine made things easier. “I think when they hit a level of late Book 2 and on, if you’ve instilled the right habits, it’ll carry forward in their practice” (Elias). One parent who found it difficult to be consistent said, “I made her look bad before I finally mastered that. That sort of motivated me to get my act together because I didn’t like the fact that it was my responsibility to help her to practice consistently and I was falling down on the job” (Michaela).

Most of the parents had little or no musical background. Although they found this challenging, it did not stop them from carrying out their role of being helpful. “Because we love music, it conveyed to our children that it was important to us, and just the fact that I devote some time to practicing with them made them understand that it was important” (Heather). Most parents found it was easier to do this if the child knew from the start that they had no option to quit—with a sense of humor, of course. One parent made it “a high priority item—with no options—so you might as well have fun doing it” (Mikey). Another parent struck a compromise. “She only had to study piano until she finished high school, or until she finished Book 6” (Elizabeth). Several parents found it exciting and enjoyable to learn right along with the child.

The parents also found a carryover of skills into other areas of life, such as working through problems, learning to concentrate, and developing persistence and consistency. One student who wanted to learn a headstand understood from her piano experience that if she persisted she would get it (Heather). A parent observed, “She’s different from non-musical children that we know—more sensitive, more discerning. It all pours over into your life” (Theodora). Another noted, “She has learned how to study” (Katie). Self-confidence was mentioned by almost all respondents.

Motivational factors include keeping charts, giving tangible rewards, and attending group performances. One mother posted a “year-at-a-glance” calendar. This year-end averaging of daily practice time revealed how much an average of a just 25 minutes per day had accomplished (Mikey). Group lessons were valued because, as one father said, “Children do what other children do by imitation” (Amaris, Mathieu). Similarly, “She could see how other children her age can play” (Lina). “Right away your child learns to play in front of other people” (Wesley, Taylor, Daniel). Several parents also noted the importance of group lessons for piano students because the piano tends to be a solo instrument. The child’s teacher, too, was considered an important success factor. One father commented, “I think the inspiration of the teacher is extremely important ” (Amaris, Mathieu). Another parent related that their teacher had “an uncanny ability to very quickly understand the personality of the child” (Elias).

I found the teacher responses to be remarkably consistent, although most did not know each other personally. This suggests that the Suzuki training program is well organized and outlines specific goals. Teacher interviews revealed that all the teachers were traditionally trained initially, and 2 of the 5 had taught traditionally before becoming

Suzuki teachers. They all believed that Suzuki training is dramatically different; all found a big difference in the progress and commitment of their students. Teachers believed that starting young was important. The reason given by Joan Krzywicki was this: “the older beginners resist using their ear more.” Advice to other parents included preparation of the environment, and enjoying each step of the child’s learning.

Pedagogically, all agreed that the one point lesson is the most efficient way to teach. Bruce Anderson admitted that it is a difficult discipline for the teacher; Marilyn Taggart commented that, as the student becomes more advanced, it becomes more challenging, but is especially beneficial at the beginning. Teachers observed that regular music listening significantly speeds up learning. Also, music reading is most successfully taught if elements are introduced gradually and if the process is started early.

In all cases, parental involvement and music listening were found to be critical success factors by both teachers and students.

Conclusion

This is a study that shows the results of the practical aspects of the Suzuki method in America. Its structure is similar to Benjamin Bloom’s 1985 study, but on a smaller scale, and with younger subjects. Bloom’s subjects were highly accomplished adults with an average age of about 35. My oldest subject is 17. Therefore, we can’t know at this time the long term outcome of these students’ efforts, that is, if they will reach virtuoso levels or become concert pianists. Bloom focused on the accomplishments of specially chosen individuals; my focus was on the Suzuki method in general. Bloom chose those who had achieved world class stature; I used no special selection criteria. My main interest was in determining which qualities contributed to the high level of ability I found in my subjects at all levels, even after one year of instruction. I attribute this outcome to the use of a pedagogically sound teaching approach—the Suzuki method.

An unexpected outcome of this study is the value of the verbatim interviews, which can serve as a reference for teachers, parents, and students. The teacher responses provide an important comparison for those interested in the differences between Suzuki and traditional piano teaching methods. They are also a source of encouragement and advice to parents (See APPENDIX L: INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS).

The parent interviews can be used as a handbook of useful suggestions for implementing regular music listening and practice. Parents were willing to share many practical and inspirational details of their experiences so that, in reading about their joys and struggles, others may glean some insight into their own situations (See APPENDIX M: INTERVIEWS WITH PARENTS).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

At the outset, I presented the idea that music training is possible and beneficial for the very young. Musical educators throughout history have been aware of the benefits and possibilities of music training for young children, but it is only within recent decades that music learning research has been approached by means of plentiful organized studies.

The purpose of this thesis has been to present evidence in support of the Suzuki philosophy and methodology of music instruction, with an emphasis on piano. In order to construct an argument for early music learning by means of the Suzuki method, I have consulted research and writings primarily from the last twenty-five years. In the course of this study, a vast body of information was encountered. My most reliable sources include scientific and academic journals, as well as recent research papers, some so new that they are still awaiting publication. It is from these that my conclusions are primarily drawn. In addition, I tested selected findings in an independent field study, which was carried out for the purpose of further documenting the results of Suzuki piano instruction from practitioners of the method in the 1990s.

The information reported here is of critical importance for parents and educators, who will want to know what action to take in order to give children the best music education possible. This documentation is relevant because the arguments have been presented in a way that has not been done before. For example, there appears to be very little previous research comparing the features of Suzuki teaching with the findings of music learning research. Comparison has not been possible to the extent presented here because many of the findings are new, and have been made possible only recently as a result of technological advances. My conclusions draw upon the abundant new evidence arising from the use of this technology.

Discussion

The results of the comparisons reported in this thesis indicate that the teaching methods used by Suzuki educators are supported by contemporary scientific research. A survey of this research indicates that Suzuki's observations and conclusions about music learning during the past fifty years have been correct.

For example, Suzuki's application of the language analogy to music learning has been used by other researchers and educators to explain the music learning process (Michel 1973; Greenberg 1976; Moog 1976; Gardner 1983; Peery 1987; Trehub 1987; Gordon 1990; Shuter-Dyson 1990; Andress 1992; Hoffman 1992; Weinberger 1994). The researchers and educators consulted here are but a few who agree that music listening is a logical first step to music learning. No research studies encountered showed otherwise. Interestingly, I did find that Suzuki's concept of listening is far beyond what many others

practice. In traditional teaching, listening typically involves hearing a piece or a phrase, and then repeating it. Suzuki's idea of music listening is an immersion concept in which a child is surrounded by fine music right from birth, as a part of life, thereby establishing readiness for lessons as young as 2½ or 3 years of age. In my personal pre-Suzuki experience, when I asked instructors if I should listen to a piece I was learning, I was told that it would be neither necessary nor beneficial.

Suzuki contends that musical talent is not an inborn gift; rather, it is an ability that must be developed. Evidence points to the fact that talent development is a long-term process requiring constant support from the environment (Bloom 1964; Michel 1973; Moog 1976; Critchley and Henson 1980; Gardner 1983; Peery 1987; Hodges 1989; Gordon 1990; Shuter-Dyson 1979; Howe and Sloboda 1991; Webster 1991; Zdzinski 1992; Weinberger 1994). The practical implication is that parents and educators need to provide the best possible environment for enhancing each child's inborn capacity.

Perhaps the most notable of Suzuki's ideas that continues to be reinforced by research is the idea of teaching music to very young children (Michel 1973; Moog 1976; Shuter-Dyson 1981; Cohen 1986; Simons 1986; Fox 1989; Scott 1989; Colin 1994; Robinson 1994; Weinberger 1994; Bower 1996; Deliège and Sloboda 1996). Early music exposure stimulates and trains musical aptitude and aids in the discovery of high aptitude (Révész 1953; Andress 1973; Michel 1973; Gardner 1983; Healy 1987; Uszler 1992). Researchers have also noted that children form music preferences at a very early age (Krugman 1943; Bradley 1971; Moog 1976; Critchley and Henson 1980; Peery 1987).

Research also supports Suzuki's belief that a music education is beneficial in other ways (Chertock 1974; Wolff 1978; Sharman 1981; Jellison 1982; Wilson 1985; Webster 1991; Crouch 1994; Rauscher *et al.* 1997). Some studies suggest that music education has a positive effect on general intelligence (Zimny 1962; Phillips 1976; Shuter-Dyson 1981; Gardner 1983; Laczó 1985). Shuter-Dyson found that tonal and rhythmic factors correlated highly to visual and auditory skills. There are also nonmusical implications of the new findings. New research suggests that musical training may enhance certain brain functions, with the early period being the most critical (Rauscher and Shaw 1994; Weinberger 1994; Schlaug, in Shreeve 1996).

It has been clearly documented that newborn infants respond to musical stimuli (Michel 1973; Moog 1976; Fox 1991; Trehub 1987; Scott 1989; Gordon 1990; Wilkin 1994). Important scientific studies of the last ten years confirm that the most important period for music learning is prior to age three. Many now believe that the process begins before birth (Gordon 1990; Weinberger 1994; Wilkin 1994; Deliège and Sloboda 1996).

Still more revealing are the results derived from the newest neurological research. Recent reports in the popular press have reported on scientific research by Bharuchia, Pankshepp, Peretz, Rauscher, Schlaug, Sloboda, Trehub, Zatorre and others examining the effect of music on the brain (see Discover Mar. 1994; Newsweek 19 Feb. 1996; Discover Oct. 1996; Time 3 Feb. 1997; Newsweek Spring/Summer 1997). The reports showed that MRI studies and PET scans now make it possible to prove scientifically what music educators and researchers have previously been able to discern only by observation—that music learning is important and beneficial, and that the process must

begin at an early age to be most effective. An important new publication is Deliège and Sloboda's reference, Musical Beginnings (1996) this is perhaps the most recent and comprehensive compilation of auditory studies which can be applied to support early music learning.

Suzuki observed that many music teaching methods do not adequately address the natural sequence of music learning. For example, most traditional piano teaching methods begin with note reading. However, studies show that a child's natural way of learning involves experience first, with the information added later (Kochevitsky 1967; Gordon 1977; Shuter-Dyson 1981; Hassler *et al.* 1985; Jordan-DeCarbo 1986; Shehan 1986; Healy 1987; Anderson 1988; Glover 1990; Zentz 1992). This concept has historical precedence with Pestalozzi, Dalcroze, Orff, and Kodály. More recently, Gordon's music learning theory outlines a specific natural order of music learning—listening, performance, reading, and gradual theoretical understanding.

In an effort to present an unbiased report, I have consulted a broad sampling of research, the bulk of which consists of favorable reports. Solid research with conflicting conclusions was difficult to find. Studies that appeared contradictory were usually very old and conducted without the benefit of today's scientific processes. For example, Belaiew-Exemplanski (1929) found that preschool children were unable to experience any harmony at all (in Moog 1976). Another example is from Révész (1946), who felt that the first year of life is of no importance of musical development. Details of these early studies were not given, and more recent evidence to the contrary is overwhelming. Other studies were too specific to contribute significantly to the broad picture, or seemed opinionated. Atarah Ben-Tovim, for example, reportedly spent a lot of energy "putting people off the piano [because] keyboards are too cerebral" (in Peggie 1991).

Looking to the Future

In this thesis I have considered the ideas and writings of Shin'ichi Suzuki and followers of his method. I have also reviewed research that helps us understand the learning process, the value of music in the lives of young children, and the natural sequence of music learning. Some research is conclusive; some is encouraging but needs more study. The results reported here can provide incentive for further investigation.

Recommended areas for further study include:

- 1) investigating language abilities of musicians with those of nonmusicians.
- 2) experimenting further the neurological bases of the "Mozart effect" to determine why music has its effect.
- 3) examining the possibility that different types of music may be needed for different types of cognitive functions (for example, analytic versus creative).
- 4) measuring the precise duration of the higher cognitive effects of music.

- 5) studying the duration of enhancement with different age groups.
- 6) considering different starting ages to find a possible “critical period” for maximum enhancement.
- 7) researching other musical instruments to determine whether keyboard lessons alone enhance spatial reasoning.
- 8) determining if it is the complex nature of music that contributes to the enhancement of brain function, or if any complex discipline could have a similar effect.

At University of California, Irvine, researchers achieved notable improvement of spatial-temporal learning from short periods of keyboard instruction. However, the report did not mention listening to the repertoire, focusing on tone quality, review and polishing of a piece, parent involvement, or home reinforcement—built-in features of Suzuki training. The study also used electronic keyboards rather than acoustic pianos. I propose that more dramatic results might be achieved with children engaged in Suzuki piano lessons. Similar studies, therefore, need to be carried out to measure the effectiveness of Suzuki piano training on spatial-temporal learning.

A critical area of concern is public action in response to the abundant research available. Much of this information has been around for decades, but public awareness hasn’t improved significantly as a result. Awareness is especially important for the adults who interact with children. Parents have the first influence on children’s learning during the time when they are most easily influenced. Educators also impact children’s lives early on. Both groups need to understand that acting upon the new knowledge of brain function can make their influence more positive and meaningful.

It now appears that good musical training has abundant benefits for young children. Justification by scientific evidence rather than anecdotal or philosophical argument should motivate parents and educators to reconstruct their notions and practices of early childhood education, making music a priority.

Concluding Comments

The purpose of this thesis has been to serve as enlightenment and incentive toward positive action upon children’s musical education. In light of the facts presented, the evidence is overwhelming, both from research and this author’s personal experience, that the philosophy and methodology of Suzuki music instruction are based on sound pedagogical principles. This study concludes that musical talent is a skill that can be developed with the right environmental stimuli, that it is important to start musical training as early as possible, and that one should seek a teaching approach that follows the “natural music learning process.” From the evidence presented in this thesis, I conclude that the Suzuki method fits these criteria and is, therefore, a pedagogically sound teaching approach supported by contemporary research.

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APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

ability: Skill, expertness, or talent (W²).

acculturation: The process of conditioning a child to the patterns or customs of a particular culture (W).

audiation: “Hearing” and comprehending in one’s mind the sound of music that is not physically present (G).

autopalpebral reflex: Closing of eyelids following sound stimulus (Michel 1973, 15).

beat: The recurring rhythmic pulse heard or sensed throughout a song or composition (M).

chord: Three or more tones sounded simultaneously (M).

contour: The shape of a melody, determined by the rise and fall of the pitches (M).

creativity: Creative ability; artistic or musical inventiveness (W).

crescendo: Gradual increase in loudness (W).

decrescendo: Gradual decrease in loudness; diminuendo (W).

dendrite: The branched part of a nerve cell that carries impulses toward the cell body (W³).

dissonance: The simultaneous sound of tones that are discordant to a listener (M).

dynamics: The degrees of loudness and softness of a song or composition (M).

form: The design of repetition or contrast in phrases or sections of a song or composition (M).

half step: The smallest pitch interval possible on a keyboard instrument (M).

harmony: Two or more tones played or sung at the same time (M).

improvisation: A spontaneously created musical performance (M).

intelligence: 1. Ability to learn or understand from experience (W); 2. A capacity of the human mind having a meaningful role in society (Gardner 1993, 53).

interval: The distance between two pitches (G).

key: The tonality, or perceived relationship of tones to one another. Songs that gravitate to the note C, for example, are said to be in the key of C (M).

key signature: One or more sharps or flats placed after the clef on the staff to indicate the key (W).

learning: The acquiring of knowledge or skill (W).

letter names: The names of the lines and spaces of the music staff (G).

measure: The division of rhythms into a specified number of beats, separated by a vertical line called a measure bar (M).

melody: A sequence of single tones which produce a tune (W^2a).

meter: The basic pattern of beats in successive measures of a piece of music (W^2).

metronome: A mechanical device that produces steady beats, the speed of which can be regulated (M).

mother tongue: One's native language (W).

motherese: Speech patterns mothers use with their infants (Hodges 1989, 12).

music babble: The "musical" sounds young children make before they develop their senses of subjective tonality and meter. Music babble is to music as speech babble is to language (G).

music learning theory: The theoretical explanation of how we learn sequentially when we learn music (G).

musical achievement: Accomplishment in music (G).

musical aptitude: The potential to achieve in music. There are two types: 1) developmental aptitude, which is innate and is affected by the quality of environmental factors; 2) stabilized aptitude, which is no longer affected by the environment. A child enters the stabilized aptitude stage at about age 9, and remains there throughout life (G).

musicality: Fondness of, sensitivity to, or skill in music (*musical*: W^3n).

neuron: The structural and functional unit of the nervous system, consisting of the nerve cell body and all its processes, including and axon and one or more dendrites (W).

perfect pitch: The ability to identify musical tones without the help of a known reference note (Stipp B10).

phoneme: 1. A set of phonetically similar but slightly different sounds in a language that are heard as the same sound by native speakers (W); 2. The smallest unit of sound in a language (Begley 1997, 30).

phrase: A musical thought or idea, often compared to a sentence in language (M).

pitch: 1. A part of a tonal pattern. A pitch is to a tonal pattern as a letter is to a word (G); 2. The highness or lowness of musical sound (M); That element of a tone or sound determined by the frequency of vibration of the sound waves reaching the ear; the greater the frequency, the higher the pitch (W^2n16a).

range: 1. The distance between the lowest and highest pitches in a song (G); 2 The distance between the highest and lowest notes of a composition, voice, or instrument (M).

repertoire: 1. A body of music that has been studied and learned (M); 2. The stock of songs that a musician is familiar with and ready to perform (W).

rhythm: The organization of sounds, silences, and patterns into different groupings (M).

rote song: A song learned by imitation rather than by note reading (M).

scale: A series of tones ascending or descending according to a prescribed pattern of intervals (M).

sensibility: The capacity for physical sensation; power of responding to stimuli; ability to feel (W).

skip: A musical interval consisting of notes more than one alphabet letter-name away from one another (*e.g.*, C to E) (M).

step: A musical interval one alphabet letter-name away from another (*e.g.*, C to D) (M).

synapse: The minute space between nerve cells (or muscle cells, etc.), through which nerve impulses are transmitted from one to the other (W).

synaptogenesis: The formation of synapses (Nash 56).

syntax: Orderly arrangement of pitches and durations which establishes the tonality and meter of a composition (G).

talent: 1. Implies an apparently native ability for a specific pursuit and connotes either that it is or can be cultivated by the one possessing it (WSYN); 2. An unusually high level of demonstrated ability, achievement, or skill in a special field of study (Bloom 1985, 5).

tempo: The speed at which a musical composition is, or is supposed to be, performed; indicated by such notations as *allegro*, *andante*, etc. or by reference to metronome timing (W).

timbre: The tonal quality characteristic of a voice or instrument (M).

time signature: The two numbers at the beginning of a piece that indicate the number of beats in a measure (the top number) and the kind of note that represents the pulse (the bottom number) (M).

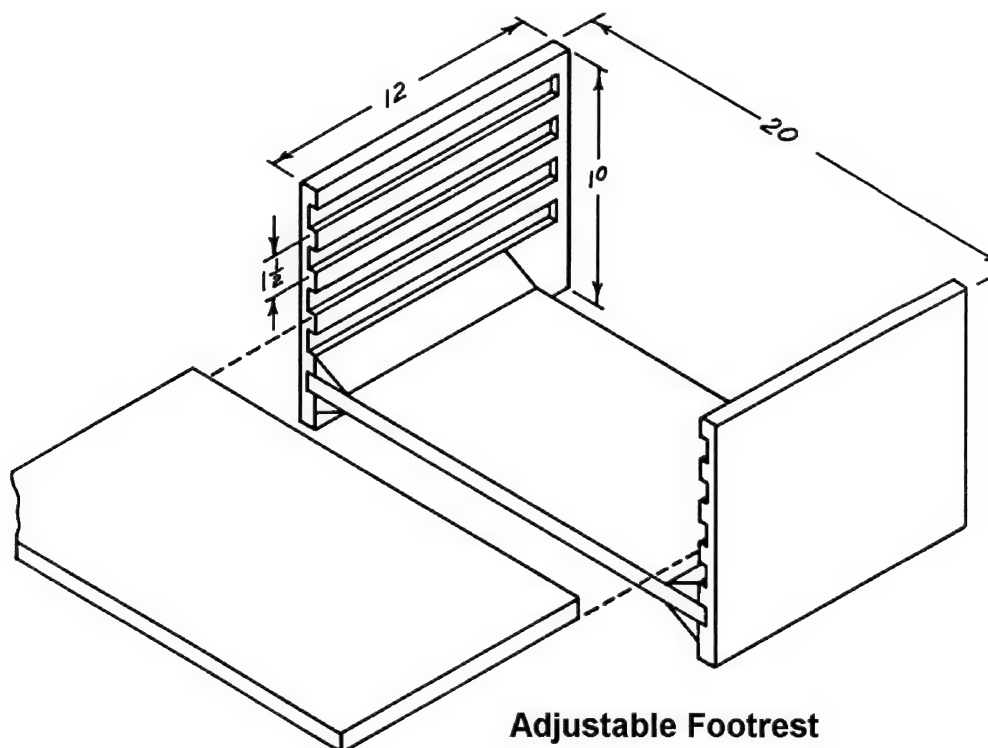
tonality: The organization of tones around a central or pivotal tone or pitch class (W^{3a}).

SOURCE CODES:

- (G) Edwin E. Gordon, A Music Learning Theory for Newborn and Young Children (Chicago: GIA, 1990) 117-124.
- (M) Dorothy T. McDonald and Gene M. Simons, Musical Growth and Development: Birth Through Six (New York: Schirmer, 1989) 289-291.
- (W) Webster's New World Dictionary of American English. 3rd College Ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988). Parenthetical numbers indicate definitions other than the first definition given (*e.g.*, W², W³, etc.).
- Others are references to items in the Bibliography (*e.g.*, Bloom 1985, 5).

APPENDIX B: DIAGRAM FOR BUILDING AN ADJUSTABLE FOOTREST

Fig. 8
Diagram for building an adjustable footrest



Source: Doris Koppelman, Introducing Suzuki Piano (San Diego: Dichter Press, 1978) 59. Reproduced with permission. All rights reserved.

APPENDIX C: TEN REASONS FOR STARTING EARLY

1. As a sense organ the ear is fully developed at birth. The brain is prepared to organize the impressions it is given. Why wait longer? By the time an infant is one month old he or she has received a full month of education, planned or accidental. To plan it is to grant the full measure of love and concern for the future of the child. To ignore it is to waste the child's potential in random development.
2. A child's powers of observation and ability to imitate are tremendous by the age of two, although it has limited judgment about what to imitate. It will repeat whatever it hears.
3. If the child hears music instead of random sounds, its profound love of music becomes intuitive and provides the best foundation for rational responses later in life.
4. Challenges, such as the differentiated tasks for each hand, are coordinated with the ear. They help to develop neurological control patterns.
5. When the child is very young it is more likely to accept a learning relationship with its parent than when it is older and seeking autonomy. This relationship, if begun early, becomes a source of pleasure and an aid to the growth of all who are involved with it.
6. The Suzuki method provides healthy social relationships. Shared playing skills among children provide an early team experience without competition.
7. As pupils of all ages play together their music tends to bridge generation gaps, developing enduring friendships and affection.
8. Children are less self-conscious in the early years and like to share their enthusiasms with friends in and out of school. They develop healthy self-images as their friends respond to their ability to play fine music.
9. Before they are eight, children have more time for music than they will later. If they have reached a level of self-confidence by the time they are eight they are less likely to become drop-outs in their later musical studies.
10. Young children love to play—unless someone spoils things. Music is essentially a “feeling” outlet in early childhood, as it should be in adult life. The study of music after the age of seven is apt to become more intellectual and mechanical. Moreover, children often become self-conscious at older ages and are easily frustrated when the teacher tries to help them move skillfully. These movements are best taught in the formative years.

Source: Elizabeth Mills, In the Suzuki Style: A Manual for Raising Musical Consciousness in Children (Berkeley, CA: Diablo, 1974) 5-6.

APPENDIX D: HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD AT HOME

- Practice regularly, every day—seven days a week—no matter how many other demands present themselves.
- Play the artist's recording of the music being learned. Do this casually, several times a day, without concern for whether the children are listening attentively.
- The age of your child will be a major factor in your approach to practice. If your child is a pre-schooler, keep the elements of a game in high priority since learning takes place best when an activity is fun.
- Let your child have some say about the schedule for daily practice. Make a chart showing the times that you have both agreed to and post it as a reminder.
- Be enthusiastic yourself about practice time!
- Find an interesting practice routine that will cover the tasks to be done. List the assignments for the week and decide in what order they will be practiced. This can be done by using a prepared chart, by drawing cards, or by some other system.
- Precious moments between parent and child for making music and working together should not have to be shared with a younger sibling. Make special arrangements if necessary.
- Know (ask your teacher) what is reasonable to expect. Children learn at different rates, but excessive demands (or leniency) as a regular diet will create tensions and disinterest.
- Actively involve your child in determining specifically what is to be learned and how to go about it. Do not tell him what the teacher said—ask him.
- Learn how to work in very small steps—one note, two notes, a measure. Connect one small step to another and rejoice in the progress.
- Motivate your student by making a chart which shows his progress. Be creative!
- Tape your practice sessions. The child hears himself. You hear yourself. You both are sure to get some objective feedback.
- Learning the notes, fingering and other technicalities is the *beginning* of study for a musical piece. Only through mastery will it contribute to the building of permanent skills.
- Never begin work on a new piece until your teacher suggests or approves it.

- Be generous with encouraging remarks, even though a good effort may not have produced successful results. Treat “praise” with caution, avoid verbalizing irritation, and reward your child with your love and appreciation.
- As you advance in the repertoire, spend *more and more* time reviewing and improving the pieces learned.
- Once or twice a week, give a home concert for the parent who does not usually supervise the practice sessions. Include bowing and applause.
- Sense when a practice session is over. It is more important to return to the instrument with joy and enthusiasm tomorrow than to force a few extra minutes today.*

* From a handout distributed at Suzuki teacher training, Spring 1994, Temple University (Philadelphia). © 1986 Suzuki World, Athens, OH

APPENDIX E: HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD AT THE LESSON

- Attend lessons regularly and teach your child to watch lessons in progress if he must wait his turn. The best way to do this is to watch the lesson yourself. This indicates to your child that something important is going on, and also gives him a role model for good behavior.
- When you practice at home, use the same routines and sequence of events that you observe at the lesson. Use the same language and practice the same exercises that the teacher uses. The teacher is watching for signs that these exercises have become easy and natural for the child so that s/he will be ready for the next steps in learning.
- Often a child will appear to be forgetful at the lesson, or do poorly in exercises which s/he did well at home. Do not become alarmed at this or interfere by giving hints and reminders while s/he is trying to pay attention to the teacher. The reason s/he is having difficulty is that s/he is working with a relatively unfamiliar person. By “helping” too much you will only postpone the day when the relationship between the teacher and the child is an easy and natural one. The child’s attention should be centered on the lesson; his/her work is with the teacher. You can best help to focus your child’s attention by not intruding on the work.
- If you have your child’s best interests at heart, let him make “mistakes” because the lesson is a learning process. S/he is learning through the errors; s/he is also learning that it is all right to take a chance and that a mistake is not the end of the world.
- If a child makes many mistakes in the lesson, do not scold him but resolve to practice more and better with him before the next lesson. Good practice is always the cure for “bad” lessons.
- Sometimes, the teacher will invite the parent to participate. At such times, a complete response is expected, so pay close attention to the lesson.
- Bring a notebook to the lesson and write down the important points as the teacher presents them. Study the notes before practice times. If you do this, the child will make steady progress, and will soon be ready for the next step in learning.
- About younger brothers and sisters at the lesson ... they are always welcome to come, to listen and to learn, but this must never be at the expense of the child receiving instruction.
- When watching the lessons of other children, show interest in these students, but avoid making comparisons between your child and others. Such comparisons can be unfair to all concerned, especially since you know a great deal about your own child and very little about the backgrounds of the others.*

* From a handout distributed at Suzuki teacher training, Spring 1994, Temple University (Philadelphia). © 1985 Suzuki World, Athens, OH

APPENDIX F: BUILDING A LISTENING LIBRARY

Composer	Title/Piece	Artist	Label	Catalog #
SUZUKI PIANO REPERTOIRE:				
<u>VOLUME 1, 2, 3</u>	Complete	Haruko Kataoka	PBF	5011
<u>VOLUME 1</u>	Complete	Haruko Kataoka	PBF	5005
<u>VOLUME 2</u>	Complete	Haruko Kataoka	PBF	5007
Mozart	Minuet (Complete Solo Piano Works)	Walter Gieseking	CAP	63688
Bach	Musette (English Suite No. 3)	Andras Schiff	PLC	21640
		Glenn Gould	COL	42268
<u>VOLUME 3</u>	Complete	Haruko Kataoka	PBF	5009
<u>VOLUME 4</u>				
Mozart	Minuet I, III, VIII, K. 315a (Complete Solo Piano Works)	Walter Gieseking	CAP	63688
Beethoven	Sonata, Op. 49, No. 2 (Retrospective Vol. 1)	Walter Gieseking	PHS	9930
		Emil Gilels	DG	419161
Bach	Minuet I & II, Gigue (Partita No. 1 in Bb, BWV 825)	Dinu Lipatti	CAP	69800
		Glenn Gould	CBS	42402
<u>VOLUME 5</u>				
Beethoven	Für Elise, WoO 59	Vladimir Ahkenazy	PLC	17751
		Alicia de Larrocha	LONDON	417751
Bach	Prelude in C (Well-Temp. Clavier, Bk. 1)	Andras Schiff	PLC	14388
		Glenn Gould	COL	52600
		harpsichord - Wanda Landowska	RCAV	M6217
Bach	2 & 3 Part Inventions	Glenn Gould	PLC	11974
		Andras Schiff	COL	52596
Haydn	Sonata in C, No. 48	Ingrid Haebler	PHIL	n/l*
<u>VOLUME 6</u>				
Bach	Little Prelude (from BWV 999)	guitar - Andras Segovia	CAP	61048
Mozart	Sonata K. 545 (Comp. Solo Piano Works)	Walter Gieseking	CAP	63688
	(with K. 281, K. 282, K. 284)	Alicia de Larrocha	RCAV	60709
Daquin	The Cuckoo (Complete Recordings of ...)	Rachmaninoff	RCA	61265
Mozart	Sonata K. 330 (Comp. Solo Piano Works)	Walter Gieseking	CAP	63688
	(with K. 282, K. 331, K. 332)	Alicia de Larrocha	PLC	17817
Scarlatti	Sonata "Pastorale" L. 413	Dinu Lipatti	CAP	69800
<u>VOLUME 7</u>				
Mozart	Sonata K. 331 (Comp. Solo Piano Works)	Walter Gieseking	CAP	63688
	(with K. 283, K. 332, K. 333)	Alicia de Larrocha	RCAV	60407
	(with K. 331, K. 457, Fantasy K. 475)	Zoltan Kocsis	HUN	12219
Handel	Harmonious Blacksmith (Complete ...)	Rachmaninoff	RCA	61265
		Alicia de Larrocha	LONDON	417372
Paderewski	Minuet Op. 14	Ignace Paderewski	RCAV	60923
		Alicia de Larrocha	MHS	n/l*

*n/l—Recordings Not Listed are out of print, but may still be available in stores.

OTHER SUGGESTED LISTENING:

Various	Plays Bach, Mozart, Scarlatti, etc.	Dinu Lipatti	CAP	69800
	Dame	Myra Hess	PHS	9114
	Für Elise; Piano Favorites	Ashkenazy, others	PLC	17751
	Horowitz the Poet	Vladimir Horowitz	DG	125258
	Piano Masterpieces (4 CD set)	Various	CLHE	1206
	Piano Greatest Hits	Various	RCAV	62662
	Private Collection	Vladimir Horowitz	RCAV	62643
	Complete RCA Recordings	Vladimir Horowitz	RCAV	616555
	Recita (Rec. 1943-48)	Dinu Lipatti	CAP	63038
	Retrospective, Vol. 1	Walter Gieseking	PHS	9130
	Retrospective, Vol. 2	Walter Gieseking	PHS	9011
	Retrospective, Vol. 3	Walter Gieseking	PHS	9038
	Spanish Serenade	Alicia de Larrocha	RCAV	61389
Bach, J. S.	Piano Works	Rosalyn Tureck	VAIA	1041
Bach, J. S.	English Suites 1-6	Glenn Gould	COL	42268
Bach, J. S.	English Suites 1-6	Glenn Gould	COL	52606
Bach, J. S.	English Suites 1-6	Andras Schiff	PLC	21640
Bach, J. S.	Goldberg Variations	Glenn Gould	COL	37779
Bach, J. S.	Goldberg Variations	Wanda Landowska	CAP	61008
Bach, J. S.	Goldberg Variations	Andras Schiff	PLC	17116
Bach, J. S.	Inventions 2 & 3 Part	Glenn Gould	COL	52596
Bach, J. S.	Inventions 2 & 3 Part	Andras Schiff	PLC	11974
Bach, J. S.	Italian Concerto, French Suites, Partita	Andras Schiff	ORG	1014
Bach, J. S.	Italian Concerto, Partita, Toccata	Glenn Gould	COL	42527
Bach, J. S.	Italian Conc., English Suites, French Su.	Sviatoslav Richter	PLC	38613
Bach, J. S.	Partitas Complete, Preludes, Fugues...	Glenn Gould	COL	42407
Bach, J. S.	Well-Tempered Clavier, Bk. 1 & 2	Andras Schiff	PLC	17236
Bach, J. S.	Well-Tempered Clavier, Bk. 1 & 2	Walter Gieseking	PLC	29929
Bach, J. S.	Well-Tempered Clavier, Bk. 1 & 2	Glenn Gould	COL	42266
Beethoven	Piano Sonatas 14, 15, 17, 21, 23, 24	Friedrich Gulda	PLC	43012
Beethoven	Piano Sonatas 1-32 complete	Vladimir Ashkenazy	PLC	25590
Beethoven	Piano Sonatas 1-32 complete	Richard Goode	ELEK	79328
Beeth., Schubert	Pathetique, Impromptus Op. 90, ...	Seizo Azuma	EPS	005
Chopin	Preludes complete	Alicia de Larrocha	PLC	33089
Clementi, Muzio	Horowitz Plays Clementi	Vladimir Horowitz	RCAV	7753
Debussy	Images Bk. 1 & 2, Arabesque (2)	Zoltan Kocsis	PLC	22404
Debussy	Preludes Bk. 1 & 2, Children's Corner	A. Michelangeli	PLC	15372
Granados	Spanish Dances	Alicia de Larrocha	RCAV	68184
Liszt	Nojima Plays Liszt	Minoru Nojima	REF	25
Liszt	Transcendental Etudes	Claudio Arrau	PHIL	416458
Mendelssohn	Songs Without Words	Andras Schiff	LONDON	421119
Mozart	Complete Solo Piano Works	Walter Gieseking	CAP	63688
Paderewski	Legendary Performers	Ignace Paderewski	RCAV	60923
Ravel	Nojima Plays Ravel	Minoru Nojima	REF	35

ADDITIONAL PIANO RECORDINGS AND RECOMMENDED ARTISTS:

Bach Italian Concerto and Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue for harpsichord—Richter, Kirkpatrick and Kipnis.

Bartok Sonatina (on same recording with Bartok's Mikrokosmos Book 6 and Out of Doors Music)—Bishop.

Beethoven Sonatas and Concertos have many well regarded soloists listed—Brendel, Kempff, Arrau, Bishop, Richter, Serkin and Backhaus.

Chopin Nocturnes, Polonaises and Etudes—Rubinstein, Browning, Anievas and Slobodanik.

Debussy Children's Corner Suite (plus other Debussy)—Entermont.

Mozart Variations on “Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman” (the theme we know as Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star); also **Two-Piano Sonata and the Fantasia K. 397**—Demus (with Shetler).

Mixed program—**Haydn Sonata No. 44, Chopin Ballades, Debussy Preludes Book 2, and Prokofiev Sonata No. 8**—Richter.

Rachmaninoff Preludes—Richter.

Ravel Sonatine; also, **Gaspard de le Nuit** and **Le Tombeau de Couperin**—Browning.

Schubert Impromptus—Curzon, Brendel, Horowitz; **Moments Musicaux**—Curzon, Brendel, Gilels.

Schumann Kinderszenen—Eschenbach, Horowitz.

Tchaikowsky Concerto in B Flat Minor—many artists, a universal favorite.

Source: Elizabeth Mills, In the Suzuki Style (Berkeley, CA: Diablo, 1974) 119.

CHILDREN'S: (The following list is compiled from this author's personal collection)

Baby Dance (Erato 106545)—A compilation of bouncy musical classics designed to introduce toddlers to fine music.

The Disney Collection, Vol. 1, 2, 3 (Walt Disney 110535, 110743, 110748)—Music from Disney productions.

Fantasia (Vista 217060)—Original Soundtrack by Walt Disney.

Parents: The Playtime Album (Angel 102376)—A collection of lively classical music for children's playtime.

Schroeder's Greatest Hits (RCA 09026-61240)—Popular piano music, chosen by the beloved cartoon character.

CLASSICAL KIDS PRESENTS: (CDs combine drama with music to draw kids into the world of classical music)

Beethoven Lives Upstairs—Historical drama of the friendship between a young boy and the great Beethoven.

Mr. Bach Comes to Call—After the dramatic send-off of his music into space aboard Voyager II, Mr. Bach drops in on a little girl at the piano—along with his magic orchestra and choir.

Mozart's Magic Fantasy—A journey through Mozart's “Magic Flute.” Excerpts include Mozart's best-known arias.

Tchaikovsky Discovers America—Excerpts of Tchaikovsky's music, plus some American music of his time.

Vivaldi's Ring of Mystery—Story of an orphan searching for clues to her past, featuring Vivaldi's “Four Seasons.”

VIDEOS: (Bogner Entertainment—featuring Jim Gamble's puppets)

Peter and the Wolf—Children work with Prokofiev to choose instruments to portray the bird, the cat, and others.

Carnival of the Animals—Relates how Saint-Saëns composed the piece as a child when his mother wouldn't let him go to the carnival until he finished his homework.

The Adventures of Peer Gynt—Drama by Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, set to the music of Edvard Grieg.

Hansel and Gretel—Hans Christian Anderson's beloved tale set to music.

APPENDIX G: BASIC SKILL LIST

Basic Skills to be Mastered at the Primary Level

1. Ability to follow instructions.
2. Ability to bow—balance* while standing.
3. Ability to sit properly—balance while sitting.
4. Ability to hold ready position—balance above keyboard.
5. Ability to imitate (to take non-verbal instruction).
6. Ability to be ready (inner concentration).
7. Ability to wait (Ready—Play).
8. Ability to listen to self.
9. Ability to listen to EVERY note played.
10. Ability to evaluate one tone.
11. Be prepared for lesson and studio environment.
12. Readiness to study—“Will you teach me?”

Additional Skills for Tone Production

1. Ability to produce a clear, crisp, even staccato.
2. Ability to let the fingers move.
3. Ability to maintain balance while playing.
4. Ability to produce a repeated note legato.
5. Ability to walk naturally on keyboard.
6. Ability to hear rests.

*The balance referred to on this list is a relaxed, natural posture—neither tense nor slumped.

APPENDIX H: BUILDING BLOCKS FOR MUSICAL ABILITY

BODY BASICS

Body Balance

Height

1. Bench—elbow level with keys
2. Footstool:
 - a. Slight downward angle from knee to thigh
 - b. Feet resting flat

Distance

1. Palm over keyboard
2. Knees under keyboard
3. Elbow slightly forward

Hand Balance

1. Palm over keys
2. Steady wrist (neutral position)
3. Walking fingers:
Move pad to tip; Balance arm behind each finger
4. Thumb:
Moves sideways; Stays with the hand

STUDY BASICS

Study Points

1. Notes
2. Fingering
3. Singing, beautiful tone
4. Steady beat
5. Meter: down/up = deep/light
6. Note values: deep (longer notes); light (shorter notes)
7. Staccato/Legato control
8. Balance of hands together:
 - a. Melody—clear tone
- b. Accompaniment—quieter, with sense of meter
- c. Voicing—within one hand
9. Dynamic contrast

Freedom of Expression - Final Polish

1. Tempo
2. Phrasing
3. Musical sensitivity; Heart
4. Make music your own; Spirit

APPENDIX I: "TWINKLE" BASICS

Pre-Twinkle

1. Bow
2. Posture at piano
3. "Ready" position—thumb on C until count of 5, then 10
4. Finger numbers

Twinkle A

1. Steady wrist kept in line with elbow; thumb close to hand or under palm
2. Even rhythm
3. Six equal sounds—all staccato
4. Clear, pleasing tone
5. Arm free of tension
6. Fingers play on pads and move from main knuckle arch (all joints flexible)
7. Thumb moves sideways from main joint at wrist
8. Tempo gradually increases to 72=quarter note
9. Meter: strongest pulse on 1st note and a slightly stronger pulse on 5th note

Twinkle B

1. Steady wrist and relaxed thumb as above
2. Correct rhythm—be sure the 2nd note is twice as long as the 1st and 3rd
3. Correct articulation: staccato—sustained—staccato
4. Focus on sustained note—"root" of legato; attack, very small follow through; balance—arm and hand should be free of tension or "turned off"
5. Clear, pleasing tone
6. Fingers and thumb move—same action for staccato and sustained
7. Tempo at 72=quarter note

8. Meter: strong pulse on 1st note and stronger pulse on 2nd note—"down-down-up"—last note very light

Twinkle C

1. Steady wrist kept in line with elbow; thumb close to hand or under palm
2. Even rhythm
3. Six equal sounds—all staccato
4. Clear, pleasing tone
5. Arm free of tension
6. Fingers play on pads and move from main knuckle arch (all joints flexible)
7. Thumb moves sideways from main joint at wrist
8. Tempo gradually increases to 72=quarter note
9. Play softly but still with clear tone; fingers will move less
10. Meter: Strongest pulse on 1st note and a slightly strong pulse on 4th note

Twinkle D

1. Steady beat and correct rhythm (2 full beats on half notes)
2. Steady wrist, relaxed thumb, loose arm
3. Legato technique
 - a. one note to the next—"walking"
 - b. one note to same note—with as small a gap between notes as possible
4. Clear, pleasing tone
5. Fingers and thumb move and "squeeze" each note with pad
6. Tempo at 72=quarter note
7. Meter: slightly stronger pulses on 1st and 3rd notes of each measure

APPENDIX J: RECOMMENDED READINGS FOR SUZUKI TEACHERS

Kataoka, Haruko. Trans. Haruko Sakakibara and Karen Hagberg. Sensibility and Education. Salt Lake City, UT: Piano Basics, Inc., 1993.

- - - . My Thoughts on Piano Technique. Trans. Kyoko Selden. Princeton, NJ: Suzuki Method International, 1988.

- - - . Thoughts on the Suzuki Piano School: A Suzuki Method Symposium. Trans. Kyoko Selden. Secaucus, NJ: Suzuki Method International, 1985.

Suzuki, Shin'ichi. Ability Development from Age Zero. Summy-Birchard, 1969.

- - - . Nurtured by Love. Summy-Birchard, 1983.

- - - . Talent Education for Young Children. Trans. Kyoko Selden. New Albany, IN: World-Wide, 1969.

APPENDIX K: SUZUKI ORGANIZATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

Suzuki Association of the Americas

1900 Folsom #101
Boulder, CO 80302

Phone: 303-444-0948
FAX: 303-444-0984
Toll-free: 1-888-3-SUZUKI

Official Publication:
American Suzuki Journal

Ask about audio-visual materials on the
Suzuki Movement.

International Suzuki Association

P. O. Box 2236
Bothell, WA 98041-2236

Phone: (425) 485-4934
FAX: (425) 485-5139

Official Publication:
International Suzuki Journal

Talent Education Research Institute

3-10-3 Fukashi
Matsumoto, Nagano 390, Japan

Phone: 81-263-32-7171
FAX: 81-263-32-7451

Piano Basics Foundation

242 River Acres Drive
Sacramento, CA 95831

Phone/FAX: 916-422-2952

Official Publication:
Piano Basics Foundation News

European Suzuki Association

39 High Street
Wheathampstead, Herts AL4 8BB England

Phone: 44-15-8283-2424
FAX: 44-15-8283-4488

Australian National Council of Suzuki Talent Education Association

P. O. Box 87, Coogee
2034 NSW, Australia

Phone: 612-399-9888
FAX: 612-399-7401

APPENDIX L: INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS

Joan Krzywicki

Wyndmoor, PA (Philadelphia Area)

Date of Interview: 11/9/97

How long have you been working with the Suzuki method?

Since 1981.

Do you have any experience with traditional methods—either as a student or a teacher? Please explain.

Yes, I was a traditional student from the time I was 5 until I graduated from college, and I taught traditionally both while I was still in high school and college, and then before I became a Suzuki teacher.

Can you describe the main difference you see between Suzuki and traditional teaching?

I guess the main difference would be that the Suzuki method approaches playing a musical instrument by ear first, developing the aural skills, whereas the traditional method immediately places emphasis on reading right at the beginning.

From your own teaching experience, what do you think is the best age to start piano lessons?

Anywhere between 4 and 6, I think.

What age has been your youngest beginner? Your oldest?

My youngest has been 1½. My oldest beginners have been adults, but even though we used the Suzuki materials, it was very often in a traditional way, using the book and so forth. My oldest Suzuki beginner was probably about 11.

Have you found any special challenges with either age group, either the very young or older beginners?

The older beginners, of course, resist using their ear more. They want very much to get into the reading. They also have less time to listen to the recordings and their parents have less influence over their environment at that point. When they're little, of course, they're around Mother and Dad all the time and home more, so they can do more listening. The younger they are, though, the bigger a challenge it is getting them to focus and, with some but not all, the attention span. You have to approach them in a nontraditional educational way.

What's the most important advice you can give parents with regard to their role in the process?

I think the biggest thing for them is to learn as much as possible about the "mother tongue" approach and to learn how they can make it work in their home, but I also feel it's important for them to enjoy the process and not to get caught up in pressure to learn things, or pressure to learn a book by a certain time, or to

finish a piece by a certain time. I think they need to just enjoy the process just like they enjoy their child learning to walk or learning to talk, just find joy in it. I think that's really important for parents. For example, it comes up when they're learning "Cuckoo" hands together. I just tell them there's no timetable, no pressure. Just enjoy it and get excited about every little achievement that happens along the way.

How effective, in your view, is the concept of the "one point" lesson?

I would think it would be the most efficient way to have a lesson. I think the more points you bring up, the less effective it becomes because there's too much to do. I just feel that the brain can only handle a certain amount of information at one time, and especially when you have to translate that into a physical motion such as playing piano. The less you can think of at one time, the more effective it will be.

In your experience, how effective has daily music listening been for your own students?

Very often I can tell who has been listening and who hasn't. If they haven't been listening, they seem to take forever to learn a piece and they can't memorize it. It's just very obvious.

Do you teach your students to read music? How and when?

Yes, I definitely teach my students to read music. I teach them through various music materials that are available to all young piano students, when they either finish Book 1, whatever their age, or when they enter 2nd grade, even if they haven't finished Book 1.

How do you choose reading materials?

Right now I'm using the Music Road by Constance Starr because I find that it relates so well to the Suzuki material. They learn the notes in the same position that they've been playing the songs in the Suzuki repertoire, so they're comfortable with that. How do I choose? I do use other books, and I do not like methods that are very cluttered with pictures and writing. I like to see just music and maybe a few simple instructions. I don't object to a few simple drawings to decorate the page, but I really avoid the ones that are busy. I find it too distracting.

What is the benefit of constant review of pieces learned?

The main benefit is that you develop the digital skills in your fingers and hands to a higher level without having to think about what finger to use, or what note comes next, or concentrate on getting everything correct. Once they become a review piece, you can just play and it's just a constant exercise. It also musically allows you to get beyond the details of playing the correct notes and so forth, and get into the expression of the music, and free yourself in many ways from the growing level and go into the more esoteric and emotional levels.

What have you found to be the value of the group classes?

Socially, I think it's very important for the children to be with other children that are doing what they're doing—taking piano lessons. It's so much better than just

seeing some other people just once or twice a year. It's very motivating. I find they practice harder that week, even if only on one piece, and they are very motivated by what they hear others do. They very often come in the next week and want to play the piece that so-and-so played last week at group. I think the motivation is the biggest thing, but also the social aspect. They enjoy it all through high school.

Please describe your own educational and professional background.

I got my Bachelors Degree at Indiana University in Bloomington. I studied with Abby Simon. I had a double major in Music Education and Piano Performance. Then I did public school music teaching for 4 years, and then I got my Masters Degree at Youngstown State University. I intended to be doing school music, but after I had children I discovered the Suzuki method in violin. Then I started teaching Suzuki piano and decided to do that. So, before 1981, I was either a classroom teacher or a private piano teacher; after that I've been a Suzuki piano teacher ever since. In 1993 I spent a short time in Japan. I also see Dr. Kataoka whenever I can. I've been doing that since 1988. In 1993 I also became a Suzuki piano teacher trainer.

Michael Jacobsen

Plainsboro, NJ (Princeton Area)

Date of Interview: 11/17/97

How long have you been working with the Suzuki method?

Since 1983—that's fourteen years.

Do you have any experience with traditional methods—either as a student or a teacher? Please explain.

I've never been a traditional music teacher. I've never taught what we would call the "traditional" method, I guess. However, like most people, I had a traditional upbringing, starting when I was very young, and so, in that respect, I'm familiar, in some ways, with the process of "traditional" teaching.

Can you describe the main difference you see between Suzuki and traditional teaching?

I think that most people, when they look for the differences, look for the things that are really on the surface, the pedagogical differences. But to me, that's all irrelevant because a lot of fine traditional teachers use a lot of things that Suzuki teachers use and vice versa. But I think there is one underlying difference—and it's philosophical.

The difference between what we call "traditional" teaching and Suzuki method teaching is the belief that talent is not inherited. In traditional teaching, it's taken for granted that some people are more or less talented than others and display that talent as a result of their training. Suzuki teachers believe that talent can be developed. That, in a nutshell, is the difference between Suzuki and traditional methods. I think everything else is inconsequential because you'll find traditional teachers that have parents come to the lesson, or whatever things we associate with Suzuki method. In traditional thinking you have good and bad students. In Suzuki method you have good and bad teachers—that's the difference.

From your own teaching experience, what do you think is the best age to start piano lessons?

Well, as far as starting lessons, I don't really look at the process of learning as starting lessons, but rather, starting to create the musical environment. In that regard, you have to begin the process of education when someone is born. That's when the environment begins to stimulate, so the ideal time to begin the process of environmental stimulation is as soon as you possibly can, you know, to the newborn infant. As far as the time when you sit them down at a piano and actually begin making expectations of them, there can't be an exact time when that has to happen, but I think that if you work hard at preparing a child, the majority of children, by the time they are 3 or 4 years old, could easily handle the program.

What age has been your youngest beginner? Your oldest?

I think you have to take that with a grain of salt because I have a lot of kids who began coming as infants to the program with siblings. As for when their

education actually began, it's hard to say, and then they became "students" later on. As far as the oldest student, I think you can begin to play at any age.

Have you found any special challenges with either age group, either the very young or older beginners?

I think, in general, you could point to several different things that come out of different age groups that are going to cause people to react differently at different ages. I think that, in some ways, there is a bigger challenge when you start teaching someone who is very young. But the challenge is for the adult, not for the child. It takes a great deal of adult patience and adult perseverance to work with young children. But I don't see that as the child's difficulty.

There are some big drawbacks in starting a child when they are much older. Their learning windows begin to close. They get to the point, especially when they hit puberty, when their whole bodies start to turn around, and educational endeavors kind of take a back seat. Those are big challenges. I think that, for a new teacher, the best thing is to start with a 6-year-old because they're very placid compared with any other age group. That's when traditional teachers like to start children, because they're placid, I mean they don't really come unglued that often. They've settled down; they're stable for awhile. They haven't gotten to the point where their bodies and their hormones are really beginning to change, and they're past the point where they're not angels anymore. That's a good window for working with new students.

How would you describe the role of the parent at the lessons?

The biggest misconception there is to call parents the home teacher. That's the biggest mistake because that puts them in a position of being an expert in the subject. It's like calling them the home doctor. If you really need medical attention, you'd better go see a medical expert.

What's the most important advice you can give parents with regard to their role in the process?

I always tell my parents that the most thing to understand is that they are creating the environment for their children since the child is at home for most of their lives. When they're in a music lesson, they're in the studio for an hour or so a week. The rest of the time they're at home, and so the parent really has to be aware of the environment they're creating at home—how that environment is including music, and how people in the home are into the process. Every aspect of the child's music study is going to come into play. The parent has to help by being supportive, and that's the big challenge for them because most of them don't have experience doing that. So, most of them, you can tell them to play the tapes and they will for awhile, then they'll start forgetting—it's not their habit. Teachers get to a point where they explain over and over. But if parents understand their role in terms of the home environment, that they're creating it, then I think that they will use the Suzuki method as we are using it.

How effective, in your view, is the concept of the "one point" lesson?

I think you have to teach one point because human beings are not capable of really dealing with many things at the same time, and younger kids especially.

They're not going to be capable of remembering to do a whole bunch of different things. So I think that the whole concept makes perfect sense. I think that learning how to really structure a "one point" lesson is the key to it—finding what is suitable for a kid to study, that's the challenge that becomes the teacher's. As a teacher, you would research, and start putting the components together in your mind. Then you begin listening to the child's playing and their reactions to what you're doing with them. You begin to see their response and where their needs are. I think it grows stronger as you get more experience and you've taught for awhile and take a lot of kids through the process. You'll know for yourself what you want.

In your experience, how effective has daily music listening been for your own students?

Well, again, I think it's indispensable that children listen a lot, and I think it's really helped them in every facet of their understanding to do a lot of listening. It goes way beyond their normal explanation. You can explain how to find the notes and things like that, but I think that listening to the performance and demonstrating also gives you a whole picture of the art form. And that's something that's often overlooked. That's something that's chalked up to being talented if you're a traditional student. In Suzuki, we credit it to a very familiar understanding that's gained through exposure.

Do you teach your students to read music? How and when?

Again, that's a very good question. I teach my students how to read music, but I think that when you ask a question like that, you're dealing in a very broad and sort of big definition—what it really means to read music. Part of the problem is that people usually think that by music you mean notes, like you know where the notes are on the page. And, of course, that's not reading music.

Think of it this way: when we're born, do we start speaking our language? This language comes into play first in our environment and not in our lessons. We see words written around us all the time. Some time down the road, Mom or Dad plunks the child on their lap and begins reading to them out of a book. Doesn't send the child home with a set of instructions in the book, just sits them down, opens the book, and starts to read to them. So, again, the written language becomes part of the environment long before it becomes useful and functional. I think that's what people don't understand about Suzuki method—when we're dealing with the environment, we're trying to make the subject part of the environment. So, in terms of teaching a child how to read, before I've actually sat down and asked them to do something at the piano, I will expose them to all of the elements of note reading, like notes and rhythms and time signatures and key signatures and things like that, before I've asked them to sit down and play something by looking at the music. But as far as working with a regular course of reading materials, that begins, for us, in the second book.

How do you choose reading materials?

As the first reading book, I use the book Method Rose, and the reason I chose that is because it's the same style as Book 1. It's not something out of their experience. I think part of the problem with a lot of music books that I've read is that I don't consider them music. They consist of exercises that sound really

dumb and that I wouldn't want to listen to anyone play, and they don't represent music, whereas the pieces in Methode Rose are all folk tunes. They're all simple folk tunes, all arranged in the same style as Book 1, so a child doesn't have to relearn another musical language but can simply use their preexisting understanding of Book 1 and play the same way, so the quality of performance can be much higher. Methode Rose is in a way a "one point" reading lesson because the melodies are the same style, same rhythms, same time signatures, same keys—all very much like Book 1. That continuity is important. That's why all the pieces in the Suzuki repertoire look similar (Book 1 folk songs, the Book 2 minuets). Some people criticize that, but this sense of continuity really helps solidify the things that you're teaching.

How about other music styles?

Kids can play a lot of different things as well, such as Debussy, Chopin, duets, etc. As far as specific styles go, I don't stray the kids too far from very singable, metrically oriented music because it's out of their experience unless you've really made it part of listening experience for a long time. If it's not in their environment, you have no business teaching it. If they're going to learn jazz, you'd better start listening to jazz players and get to know the style—the sound of the language—so it's not strange to them. Jazz teachers have always known this because jazz is an aural tradition. Mixing styles can be dangerous, and not all styles appeal to all kids. You have to shape their experience before you start shaping the pedagogical material that's being thrown at them. That's why a lot of kids falter with the things they're being asked to do.

What is the benefit of constant review of pieces learned?

The benefit is that, every time you go back and play a piece and review it, you can choose a higher musical goal than the one you had before. If you don't do that, you're wasting your time. You have to look at review as a process of forward progress, not of going backwards or staying in the same place. That's why a lot of kids will say they get bored with playing "Twinkles," because the teacher never asks them to do anything else but to play the music again. You have to give them a new goal, a new musical target to shoot for. Suzuki says, "Raise your ability with a piece you can play," so play better than you did before. Then you have to know what "better" is. Review is critical. It is important to know that, when you go back, you are raising your standard. You are moving to another musical goal. The child and the parent need to know what that goal is.

What have you found to be the value of the group classes?

I think group classes have a value because you become a part of the social environment. You've given them an audience so they can play for each other. You can also work on some things without taking the time to teach it to each child, for example, introduction to things like notation. Notation can be done in a group. You can do it all at the same time because they don't all have to sit at the piano to do it. They can be doing the activities together. I think the social interaction is a big part, too.

Please describe your own educational and professional background.

I had a sort of eclectic background in music, but I did start music when I was 3 years old, in singing. Later, when I got into piano, I was 7 years old, and I had traditional teachers. I studied for about 3 years with a person who was mainly a jazz player. I was very much into listening, and he explained to me a lot about music theory and improvisation and things like that. When I got to college, I had, again, traditional teachers on a more professional level. I was also lucky to get a variety of big concert artists. That was all prior to my Suzuki training.

I think the one thing about my Suzuki training was being able to do long term teacher training, for a very long period of time, to have one person—one very, very fine teacher—to work with over the course of years. It's like learning a craft and not just a set of facts—you need to watch someone and get a sense of the process. I worked with Peggy for over six years. Besides the fact that I'd have a lesson and play for her, or whatever, I would watch her teach a lot of lessons. I would also have her come and teach all of my students and, basically, from that, I was able to sort of define how I was doing with teaching my students, seeing how they reacted working with Peggy. It really showed me a lot about my own teaching. By working with one person, I was able to get a lot more focused in my training than if I had taken courses here, courses there, and sort of tried to piece them together. That is what I think a lot of people do. I think I would rather have that kind of background. So whenever I did go take another course, and I've done a lot of individual and week-long units and things like that, I would have a basis to work with. I would always have a way to fit it into a sort of preexisting mold. I wasn't patchworking things together. I had an idea how it would fit.

Marilyn Taggart

Schenectady, NY (Albany Area)

Date of Interview: 1/12/98

How long have you been working with the Suzuki method?

I started as a Suzuki parent in 1973, and then I became a Suzuki teacher in 1978. My daughter was a Suzuki violin student, and just watching what was going on with her, and then in the group lessons with the other kids, over a five year period, I decided that I really wanted to do this with piano.

Do you have any experience with traditional methods—either as a student or a teacher? Please explain.

Oh, yes. As a teacher, I taught traditional piano from 1965 to 1978—13 years.

Can you describe the main difference you see between Suzuki and traditional teaching?

The main difference that I see is that the inner capabilities and senses that are there in every human are more easily awakened and stimulated by using the Suzuki method. In other words, when you demand that the ear and the body and the mind work together without being directed through the eyes, from notes on paper, it seems in most people to stimulate and awaken a much stronger use of those senses than the number of kids and grownups who respond to learning the other way. There are a number of things about the way they hear and the way that they respond to rhythm and the way they use their bodies. It's simply that, for most people, are never awakened. It's as if there's a capability inside that nobody ever finds the button to push to open the door.

Learning by starting with listening and doing and modeling awakens this in everyone that I have ever worked with in this method, whereas in the 13 years before I taught Suzuki, the ratio of people that it became easy for—that the ear and all parts were responding—was maybe 3 out of every 10. The other 7 were sort of going through the motions and pushing down fingers in response to the little black notes on the paper, but they weren't really internalizing it and they weren't reacting. In Suzuki, I would say you get 9 out of 10—really 10 out of 10. I've never really seen anyone for whom it doesn't have a significant impact internally in some way. If they have actually done the listening and they have done some practicing, even if they're not very assiduous, it has an impact somehow.

From your own teaching experience, what do you think is the best age to start piano lessons?

I like 4.

What age has been your youngest beginner? Your oldest? Have you found any special challenges with either age group?

The youngest I've ever started was 2½, and that was a sibling, so in a way it almost doesn't count because the child had already had so many years of exposure in the home. But if you just took a 2½-year-old off the street who had not had all that intense listening, I don't know if it would work quite as well. I think it can be done depending on if the child is capable of following directions

and focusing for a short amount of time. Especially if you were a parent who was also a teacher, you could do it with a really young one—no reason why not. You could structure the child's life so that it was there every day. The only limit would be if they understood some of the directions. But even then, you could start gradually. But the age I like best to start is 4 because they have a longer attention span, and so in the context with which we have to work with them—the teacher—in that the parent brings them to you, it's a better use of time. But I'm sure you could do it with a 2-year-old if the Mom came every day and you had 10 minutes—I'm sure you could. It's just not very efficient for most teachers to work that way.

The oldest pure raw beginner was about 10 years old. At the age of 10, it's not something you can do unless the child really, really wants to do it because the whole parent-child-teacher triangle is different when you're starting at 10. A 10-year-old is not going to take the kind of direction from the parent that a 4-, 5-, 6-, or 7-year-old is going to take. I have no problem with any age, but past, say, 7, it really has to be child-directed. The child has to be the one who says, "I really want to do this."

I'd like to add something here—I've worked with two older people. One was about 45; the other one was 77. They both had had some piano before, and they played terribly! The 45-year-old had been playing for 10 years; the 77-year-old had been playing on and off for maybe 30 years. They both played very badly and they loved the piano and they really, really wanted to play, and they were both willing to start over. That was the only condition under which I took them both—because they begged and begged—and I finally agreed. They both could read music quite well. It's just that their playing sounded terrible. It was erratic and stuck together and full of rhythm errors and uncomfortable for them. It's amazing that they had kept persevering. They really had to start over, so they both did their listening faithfully for several hours every day. It was quite a challenge for them as adults to take away all their crutches. They had to just work from within themselves and what they heard on the tape. They both progressed amazingly!

The 77-year-old went from Book 1 to playing Bach Preludes and Fugues and the Well-Tempered Clavier because that's what she really wanted to do. She practiced four hours a day for a period of several years. The 45-year-old got in an hour to two hours every day, even though she had a high stress job as a researcher at GE. She progressed from "Mary Had a Little Lamb"—she would get lost in the middle, that's how bad her ear was; she couldn't hear the difference between ascending and descending pitch; five notes in a row she would get lost—to Book 4, playing every single piece memorized, the whole bit. We finally had to stop because I was coming to Vermont so much. For both of them to go that far was a revelation. They could feel things awakening inside them. It was fascinating to work with them.

What it showed me, and what I learned about my own ear ability, is that it gets better and better and better the more you teach. Before, even though I did memorize, it was all only intellectualized. But my whole body-ear connection is totally different after twenty years of doing this.

How would you describe the role of the parent at the lessons?

First of all, I ask my parent to fill me in briefly at the beginning on what they have worked on this week, so that I know what they were able to do and what they weren't. I want to encourage them to be very honest about it. I don't mean that I want them to tell tales about the children at all, but they say things like, "We've been able to figure out the beginning of 'Little Playmate,'" or "We worked on the beginning of 'Minuet 2,'" and "We're this far, and we've kept our review, and we're doing thus and such." They give me this information so that they're a part of the process. During the lesson, I ask them to sit quietly and to sit very close, and to take notes and to tape also if they can. I talk to them quite a bit. If there's something that's difficult, or if I want something practiced a specific way, I'll share it with both the child and the parent. I don't expect them to be totally passive about it. Their role at the lesson is not to tell me any tales about how the child has or has not cooperated. That's done in private. They call me ahead of time, or they can pass me a note. If I see that there's any kind of tension—for example, at some point kids try to race things and the parent is trying desperately to get them to slow down—we'll try to take the issue and examine it, maybe have a good laugh about it. I'll say, "I wonder if your Mom has ever heard you play it like this" and I'll play something ridiculously fast. Everybody will laugh and then we'll talk about why that might not be such a good idea, and then the next time the parent says "Slow down" would the child please listen to them. I try to validate the things that the poor parent has been trying to get the child to do.

It's not so much just what the parent's role at the lesson is that I'm talking about. It is a partnership. I don't just stick the parent in the corner and have them feel like they have nothing to do with this. We do have a sharing. I both give them advice, I ask them what they've done. I try to make the parent feel like a participant. Two things the parent mustn't do: 1) They must not tell tales in a negative with the child sitting right there; and 2) They mustn't interrupt or correct the child while we're doing it. Occasionally you'll run into a parent who just wants to talk all the time about what went on and you can't let that happen.

What's the most important advice you can give parents with regard to their role in the process?

It's what Mary Cay Neal tells her violin parents, "If they will do exactly what I tell them, that in ten or fourteen years time, their child will play the violin very, very well." It's that simple—do exactly what I tell you. What I tell them is a lot of things besides the music itself. Some is subtle advice about how to practice, how to get along during practicing, what they should be listening to, and little hints if maybe they're not listening enough. I don't come out and bawl them out, but if you have a really good teacher, and you really do everything he or she says, like "Please take notes," you do that. "Please practice every day," you arrange your family life so that happens. "Please strive for this particular point to be practiced." "Please do it 200 times." It takes usually a year or two before they really do understand that you really do mean what you're saying.

The other important advice I'd give parents, having been through it myself with three different sets of kids, is to keep trying and hang in there and

don't give up—on the method, on the child, on the study, on the consistency—if some days, you think, “Why am I doing this? It would be so much easier if we all just sat around and watched TV in the evening.” Just hang in there and don't give up.

How effective, in your view, is the concept of the “one point” lesson?

It's a great concept. I sort of hang it up on the wall as a goal to aim for, but for practicality, it usually doesn't work that way. If I were going to be able to teach somebody three times a week, then you could really utilize it. But it doesn't work in reality as the children get more advanced because they're working on too much repertoire. Later on, especially when they're reading and you get into Book 3 and up, you can scan ahead of time with the parent and child on four different teaching points in a particular piece that you want them to pay attention to when they're practicing. It's crazy to just touch on one when you know that with the other three they may spend another week and maybe seven hours of practicing doing in a way that is not in their best interest. So, at first it's good, but as the music becomes more complex and they can handle more at a time, it goes out the window. The thing is, the principle is really great. Once you're past the learning of the notes and the basic technique for something, it's a really good idea to take one aspect and focus on that aspect, maybe in an entire piece, or just two measures, and take the time to work on that in great detail rather than just hearing a piece and saying, “OK, there are six different things you need to work on in here and ... da da da da da,” and you don't spend any time on it.

What a one point lesson means to me a lot of the time is to take the time out to put other things aside and focus on one aspect and not be afraid to do that. But you can only do that when the parent is well trained about how to still keep the practicing organized at home and not let everything else go just because you only focused on one thing at the lesson.

In your experience, how effective has daily music listening been for your own students?

Terrifically. I wish some of them would do more of it, but on the whole I'm very pleased with how much they do. What's really great is, as they get more advanced, they expand their listening and the parents spend a lot of time looking for particular pianists and different recordings and the kids and the parents end up with quite a library. I think it's great.

Do you teach your students to read music? How and when?

Of course I teach my students to read! I introduce it, in general, when they're getting ready for their Book 1 concert. For most, if they started at 4, they finish Book 1 at age 5 or 6. Usually at Book 2 we start with preparation for reading. At age 5, I do a lot of pre-reading, such as Frances Clark Time to Begin. At 6, 7, or 8, I'll do the pre-reading, I use a magnet board at the lesson, and I'll use the Alfred method or some other reading method. After finishing Level 1 of one method, we'll go into Level 1 of another viewpoint. I'll use Level 1 of usually at least three different methods before moving on so that they'll get several different viewpoints. This way they really understand it at the beginning.

When we start reading, at first I spend over half the lesson time on reading and make it a high priority for six months to a year. In fact, sometimes

their other progress seems to stagnate for that time, but if you're going to make it important, you really have to focus on it in this way.

What is the benefit of constant review of pieces learned?

I tell my students, "Your mind is like a magic closet. The more you put into it, the more it can hold." That is why the children who keep all the pieces end up with this ability to remember tons of stuff. The ability to remember more grows with use. There's also the strength it creates in their technique. Accumulated review builds an ability to play better because, the more times the signal goes down the same neuro-pathway, it forms a deeper groove. Some pieces seem to have a required "cooking time," as I call it. It just gets better and better with time if you remember it, even if you don't practice it as intensely as you used to.

What have you found to be the value of the group classes?

There are three benefits: 1) Kids love to be with kids their age who play piano. They love to interact with each other. The piano is lonesome sometimes; 2) For the teacher, you can present some concepts more efficiently with games—kids love to play games—in a group than having to cover the same material privately; 3) Parents enjoy to see other children and other parents doing the same thing they're doing. It forms a team spirit. It's also healthy to see the way everybody is doing and improving—or having trouble—or practicing more than you are.

Please describe your own educational and professional background.

From a workshop brochure: Marilyn Taggart holds a B.M degree (piano performance) from Converse College and an M.M. degree (piano pedagogy) from Catholic University of America. She has a national reputation as a clinician and lecturer in the areas of piano technique and musicianship, and is also widely recognized as a master teacher of children and a specialist in physiological and coordination problem-solving for pianists and teachers. Marilyn cites observation of Dr. Suzuki himself, Haruko Kataoka, John Kendall, Doris Koppelman, Ronda Cole, and Lorraine Fink as being most influential in her approach to Talent Education. Her students have won numerous awards. Listed in International Who's Who in Music and American Keyboard Artists.

Peggy Swingle

Bainbridge Island, WA (Seattle Area)

Date of Interview: 1/28/98

How long have you been working with the Suzuki method?

Twenty-five years.

Do you have any experience with traditional methods—either as a student or a teacher? Please explain.

I've never taught traditionally, but I grew up in a household where violin was being taught traditionally.

Can you describe the main difference you see between Suzuki and traditional teaching?

I think the biggest difference is that, in Suzuki, we really have the conviction that every child can learn—that talent is not inborn, but can be developed if you start young enough. This is different than the traditional idea—that talent is something you either have or you don't have. And I think the corollary to that is the fact that it's the environment which is going to develop the child's abilities, by the child's responses to what's in the environment. I think those are major differences.

How did you get involved with the Suzuki method?

While I was taking my Montessori training. There was a woman in the class who was a violinist who was planning to start, with another woman, a Montessori/Suzuki program. We often talked in the breaks about how compatible Suzuki was with Montessori. That's how I found out about it. Later on, she tracked me down about coming to teach their preschool classes at an actual Suzuki school in Seattle. That's how I got into it.

From your own teaching experience, what do you think is the best age to start piano lessons?

3½ to 4.

What age has been your youngest beginner? Your oldest? Have you found any special challenges with either age group, either the very young or older beginners?

I've started a lot of kids between 3 and 4. I think the challenge of that age group is simply teaching the parents how to work with them. I think the children are terrific—it's a very wonderful age group to work with. The parents sometimes are impatient, and are more goal-oriented than the children, so that's something that you have to work with because sometimes the parent progress is slow at the beginning. But it gives them a terrific foundation. The advantage to starting that young is that they like feel music's been part of their life for their whole life. They can't remember a time when they didn't play. So, when they get to difficult ages later on, it's much easier to keep them going.

I think the oldest beginner I've ever had was 9. That is a very challenging age because the children are just going into pre-adolescence. They are reluctant to let their parents help them. They are more impatient with their progress, and they get into the moody adolescent stage very quickly. Although

I've had success with a couple of kids that age, I really feel that it's not as good an age to start as much younger because it doesn't give you as much time to build a foundation with the child.

How would you describe the role of the parent at the lessons?

I think the role of the parent at the lesson is as observer—that the parent should be very quietly supportive of the child, that they are not really participating in the lesson. They are just watching and making sure they understand what it is that the child needs to practice at home so that they can make sure that it's done correctly. And at the end of the lesson, I think it's important that the parent and teacher make sure that they both understand what the assignment is for the next week.

What's the most important advice you can give parents with regard to their role in the process?

I think—to remember that they are the most important part of the child's environment, that they are the role model for the child's attitude toward music and toward practicing. So, if the parent has a very big feeling of excitement and love of music, then it doesn't really matter how much they know about music. That's going to be communicated to the child. If the parents communicate by their actions that they have great confidence that their child is going to do well and that practicing is going to be an enjoyable experience, then that's what the child will pick up and that's the attitude that the child will develop.

I think the second thing is to be sure that the tape is played every day, and that the practicing is done every day, so that they're setting up an environment that is a consistent aspect to the child's musical development.

How effective, in your view, is the concept of the "one point" lesson?

I think there's a lot of confusion about the "one point" lesson because it sounds like you should only do one thing at the lesson, and I don't interpret it that way. I think the idea of the "one point" lesson is that you introduce only one new concept, and you make sure that the child really, really understands it so that they can go home and do it correctly. I think that's kind of variable, though, because there are some kids who can easily take two new concepts. I think the idea behind it is that you don't throw lots and lots of new things at them—and not have time to reinforce them—because the idea of practicing is that you're doing it correctly. So, you want to only introduce as much at the lesson as you can have the child do correctly for you many times in the lesson so that you know it's going to be done well at home. But I think that there are certainly a lot of other things you can do to reinforce things you've done before.

In your experience, how effective has daily music listening been for your own students?

Oh, I think it's absolutely vital. It's very obvious, the children who listen every day. Their progress is much faster, and it's much more consistent. For the young children, sometimes it doesn't show up immediately, but those who have listened every day—especially the more they've listened every day—once their coordination and their attention and their motivation all catches up with itself, then they just fly! So, if I have a student who is doing really well, I know that

they're listening every day, and they're listening a lot. There's a direct correlation between the amount they're listening and the kind of progress they're making.

Do you teach your students to read music? How and when?

The answer is "Yes." Every musician has to be able to read music. I do think that it's important that the children get their basic physical, technical skills before reading is introduced. So, what I do is, I introduce pre-reading skills broken down into very small parts while they're in Book 1 at group lessons. So they learn about rhythmic notation, and they learn about interval recognition, they learn to sing solfège, they learn all the parts of reading music without actually doing it. Then, somewhere around the end of Book 1 or the beginning of Book 2, they actually get a reading book. They actually start reading, and they have a reading assignment to do for every lesson.

How do you choose reading materials?

I have a series of things I like to use because I feel they work, so I always start with—after they've done all the pre-reading—Methodé Rose. After Methodé Rose, we go into a Czerny book, and at the same time, a Methodé Rose book. They're so used to the intervals and the sounds of the Classical that it's good for them to read something that's a little bit unexpected. That's why I do Kabalevsky. After that, we continue with Czerny because there are a lot of good studies that are good for reading. By the time they're in Book 4 or 5, I'm giving them pieces outside the repertoire, and they'll usually start as reading pieces. Then we decide whether they're going to become part of their actual repertoire or not.

Besides the Kabalevsky, do you teach other music styles?

I don't do very much of it. I do do Kabalevsky. They're fairly young when they're doing that—they're probably 8 or so. I do think that the Suzuki literature has very little Romantic literature in it, so I usually, when they're fairly young, try to give them a tape to listen to of Romantic music. We have a couple of kind of jazzy duets that sometimes we do, and sometimes they bring things from school. But, although I encourage them to listen to all kinds of music, I really don't teach much outside the Classical repertoire.

What is the benefit of constant review of pieces learned?

I think there are two benefits. First, you can really perfect and bring a piece up to a higher level. If it's very easy to play the notes, you can raise the level of musicianship by using review pieces. Secondly, it builds memory. In traditional lessons, usually we were learning a piece, and that was the only piece. You maybe had one other piece, but maybe not even one other one. In Suzuki, the idea is that you always have a repertoire, which I call building your "Memory Box." If a child can play an entire book of Suzuki literature, that's often the length of a short concerto movement, so they're being prepared to play longer forms, and to have the memory capacity to do that. I think those are the two great benefits of review.

What have you found to be the value of the group classes?

Well, the piano is a solo instrument, and it's a rather lonely instrument, although it of course has the benefit of being complete, where the other instruments need accompaniment. So I think, first of all, the group lesson provides the social experience for the kids, just to come together, play for each other, play with each other. But I also use it to teach theory and reading skills, so part of every group lesson is used for that, which means that I have to spend very little time at the lesson, and to me that means that I can teach a reading skill once instead of thirty times, or once for each group instead of once for each child. This means that I can spend maybe five minutes at the lesson just listening to their reading for that week, and the rest of the lesson on music.

Please describe your own educational and professional background.

I had a very strange musical training. As I said, I grew up in a family of professional musicians in New York—my father was a conductor, and my mother was a professional violinist. He was also a classically, Juillard-trained violinist-violist. So, there was music going in the house all the time. I would say that I had a sort of Suzuki upbringing, only it was live music instead of tape because on the weekends and off hours, some of the best musicians in New York were performing in our living room. At the same time, our parents were not that keen on us becoming musicians. They felt that it was a very hard life. So, while we had lessons from the time we were about six—we were expected, it was just assumed that we were going to play very well—we were not really given a whole lot of encouragement, and almost no praise, for what we were doing. I really did want to go into music, go to Juillard or music school, and my parents would not let me, so I went on to college and studied other things. But I kept playing the piano.

After I graduated, I started taking lessons privately again, went into Montessori, which is how I got back into early childhood education, and from that point on, I've just studied privately, and when I felt I needed to know something more, I'd take a course at the university. In 1986, I went to Japan and studied for four months there, and before then, I should back up and say, from about 1973 on, I have been going to watch Mrs. Kataoka twice a year or more, and any other teachers that I could find in their studios, to learn about Suzuki. My oldest daughter was a Suzuki violin student, and so for awhile, I also taught Suzuki violin, Book 1.

Bruce Anderson

St. Pete Beach, FL (Tampa Area)

Date of Interview: 2/13/98

How long have you been working with the Suzuki method?

I began teaching the Suzuki method in 1974 or 1975, so it's over 20 years now.

Do you have any experience with traditional methods—either as a student or a teacher?

Yes. Of course, I had my own training which was not Suzuki method. I started piano at the age of 8 and had traditional training—that's my greatest knowledge of traditional method. Also, my Master's Degree was studying music education, where we mainly studied the traditional approach and just touched upon some of the newer approaches, which included barely the Suzuki method. But I would have to say that most of my own training in my young life was traditional up to the age of 19, when I first came into contact with the Suzuki method.

Can you describe the main difference you see between Suzuki and traditional teaching?

The main difference to me is the philosophical frame of mind of the teacher, which is that, truly, anyone can learn, and that we are not looking to select those who will be successful as different from those who will not. We have the thought that any new student who comes to us—if we can figure out how to teach them, if we can be a good enough teacher—that child will be able to learn. I think that's the biggest difference. Most traditional teaching is based on the presupposition that some kids are just cut out for it and some are not.

From your own teaching experience, what do you think is the best age to start piano lessons?

It depends completely on the amount of prior environmental exposure. A baby who is born into a family that has all the environmental influence already there from the day of birth, such as a sibling already studying the method or studying music, will be able to start—the youngest I had was 2. And yet when a child comes to me even at the age 4 or 5, and has had no environmental influence, then we have to start with environment then. So actually, more than the age, it depends on when the musical environment was established. If it was established from the day of birth or before birth, and if, in addition to a musical environment children have been in an environment of watching a lot of other children studying and taking lessons with the teacher, then I guess the ideal age is 3.

What age has been your youngest beginner? Your oldest? And have you found any special challenges with either age group, either the very young or older beginners?

The youngest, I understand, was one day short of her 2nd birthday; therefore, she was 1 year old. And the oldest was, I believe, 68 as a beginner. Interestingly enough, that question is very valid. I found more similarity between the very young and the very old in the style of learning, meaning that they were able to do very well with being asked to concentrate on only one point at a time. If I were to ask for more than one point, even if I were to ask for two things at once, it became very difficult for them to be able to do that. And so I found that in teaching this 68-year-old, who became 73 in the process, my lessons had to be

more tailored actually to the young child—then he was quite successful. I had to be very specific and to ask for only one point at a time.

How about those who want to start around, say, their teen years?

I've had all ages in between—I've had 8-year-olds start; I've had 10-year-olds start; I've had teenagers start—and I still feel that this is the right approach to learning for any age because it would be the way I would recommend anyone of any age to learn a language, which would be first by listening and then by learning the sounds and lastly by reading. It's just that, of course, the teacher has to tailor the learning to the individual need. If it's a teenager, then I'm going to certainly need to say things differently and do things differently. You have to talk to a teenager more like a young adult. They appreciate that—they sit up straight and they do things because I'm respecting them as an adult. I also explain that we'll be doing some nursery rhymes at first, but it's only for the technical development that they need and soon they'll be into the great music. If I explain this to them ahead of time, they don't mind doing the "Twinkles" and "Mary Had A Little Lamb." But starting at any age, certainly I think this is the right approach.

How would you describe the role of the parent at the lesson?

I say this in most of my workshops, that I believe that the parent needs to be: 1) an observer of the teacher interacting with the child—a silent observer. Often they're interjecting even with their body language. Their sighs and their body movements say a lot; and 2) to be the teacher's helper, so that the teacher is totally in control of the lesson and conducting the lesson, but makes sure that the parent is employed as an assistant at the lesson. This is very important so that, at home practice, the child will accept the parent's help. If the parent comes across as the teacher's assistant, having played that role in the lesson, then the child will accept their guidance at home, not as a teacher, but as a helper.

What's the most important advice you can give parents with regard to their role in the process?

To not lose sight of the larger picture. They will tend to become so detailed in what they see, and think about what their children practice down to the specifics, which are important, but not to lose sight of the total picture, in other words, the forest for the trees. It's very important to say that our goals in what we're doing in this education are really 10 years down the road. They have to realize that it takes long-term training for the child to blossom, and that they need to be able to be effective. Even if they're looking at the daily step-by-step, they need to realize that everything they're doing is for the child to blossom at the age of young adulthood with certain skills by then.

How effective, in your view, is the concept of the "one point" lesson?

Very, very—and it's very difficult to achieve. I think it's the one thing that, as I had mentioned earlier, the younger student and that older student actually forced me, as a teacher, to be more disciplined in that role. The teacher needs to be able to allow a student to play anything, and then to form the #1 priority, and to fix that #1 point through lots of repeating, and not be giving too many different

points. It's our discipline as the teacher—and not always achievable, but very important—and very effective to the student when we can do it.

In your experience, how effective has daily music listening been for your own students?

Oh, it's the #1 point. Without it they wouldn't be able to learn the language of music. And there's never been enough! I'm always having to ask for more. And again, the teacher's #1 job is to remind the parents that the real learning is taking place at a subliminal level, allowing the music to enter through repetitive listening, and that we are then doing the second step, which is teaching the tools to be able to emulate that beautiful music that they're hearing. But the listening is all-important. I've seen the difference—and it's most obvious in the student's progress—in the amount of listening they do at home.

Do you teach your students to read music? How and when?

It should be parallel to the language reading process, which is: first, you need to be sure that the child is exposed to the printed musical page way in advance of when they're ever asked to read it. It needs to be in their environment and they need to casually see it. All through Book 1, the printed page is being shown to the parent constantly and the child is simply looking on and there's no pressure for them to be reading, but there certainly are understandings that the symbols are there, and the importance of them, and also knowing that ultimately one day they will learn to read. That period of time of not having any pressure to learn to read is going on during all the tender years of study.

Then, you need to make sure that their reading is following the concept of Suzuki approach to anything, which means step-by-step, easy enough so that it's effortless before moving on to the next step. The reading is started in a separate book, which is much much much easier than the level of the pieces they're working on in the Suzuki book by the time they're ready to read, which I find is usually Book 2. The level should be so easy that it's effortless along the way. When things are effortless and able to progress from that point, then there's a confidence and desire to learn to read. Otherwise, they feel a failure and want to avoid the reading.

After I've started that level of reading with the students, then the third level of reading, which will be started much later, is sight reading, which trains the final skills needed in our musical society—being able to read at sight. This again should start at a much easier level all over again as they're continuing with their reading in a higher level book.

Do you teach other music styles besides the music in the Suzuki repertoire?

Because the only period that's not represented in the Suzuki volumes is the 20th century, then I do begin introducing a piece of 20th century music to the students—usually after about Book 3 level in the form of one piece in between each in the volume that the student chooses. This is so they can become familiar with the language of 20th century music while they're still young.

Also, I encourage them to listen to all kinds of music and to go to concerts. One of my students has become a jazz piano major at the college level. Even though I know nothing of jazz piano and have taught him nothing of that, he has the basic tools to be able to handle that. I also have encouraged students,

from a young age before they have developed the factor of being self conscious, to compose and to create music of their own.

What is the benefit of constant review of pieces learned?

When a piece is more familiar and more effortless, that is when higher levels of musicianship and musical quality can be asked for, and if that's not happening, then the pieces will simply be boring to the student. In other words, the teacher must ask for more and more refinement and quality musically from the higher pieces. That's accomplished with having goals for those pieces. When I have my group lessons of multiple pianos, then the students are using older repertoire to refine and polish to a higher degree.

What have you found to be the value of the group classes?

Number one, it's an important factor to the children's motivation and enjoyment. Children are social learners and always learn more happily in groups. Suzuki recognized this and this is why right from the beginning the violin group lessons were first and foremost. With the piano, I am now doing piano group lessons weekly and it shows how excited and motivated the kids are to play in groups—they actually sit a little straighter and play a little better in order to make the group work better. So the group is basically for their motivation and enjoyment, but it also is a way to stimulate musical understanding.

Please describe your own educational and professional background.

My music education was traditional from the age of 8 in piano, but singing in choir was earlier than that. Then, Bachelor of Arts with a major in music where I studied also the organ, and then the organ became my major instrument. And then the Master's Degree in education, studying various methods. The Suzuki method training started during the master's study with workshops in this country—with Dr. Kataoka from Japan. This was in the early '70s. Then I went to Japan in 1977, where I stayed for 3½ years studying at the head school—the Suzuki Talent Education Institute—with Dr. Suzuki and Dr. Kataoka until 1980. After that graduation, as Suzuki helped us understand, is when our study really begins—with the teaching of the students. This is really when teachers learn the most—when they start teaching young children.

APPENDIX M: INTERVIEWS WITH PARENTS

Mikey, 10 (Book 3)
Student of Peggy Swingle

FAMILY PROFILE:

- MOTHER: Doris, homemaker/language teacher
- FATHER: Michael, neuroradiologist
- SIBLINGS: Only child, home-schooled

7/31/97 - INTERVIEW WITH MOTHER:

At what age did Mikey begin piano lessons?

4

Who initiated the idea of lessons (parent or child)? Why?

It was Mikey's idea. We have a beautiful grand piano. Mikey's dad always played. His friend also plays so he was motivated and inspired. At his first observation he said to the teacher, "If it's not my turn, I'll never come back to your house again." He was so excited!

Would you say Mikey showed unusual potential for musical training?

Not at first. Now he's definitely talented—it comes easier to him than at the very beginning. I'm the worst pianist in the family.

Why did you decide on the Suzuki method?

I totally believe in the structure and discipline; it's a goal-oriented program that also takes into consideration the individual.

What do you think are the benefits of starting young?

The greatest benefit is to learn to stick with something that turns out no be not so much fun after awhile. There were ups and downs. It's a lesson of life—it teaches persistence.

An important feature of Suzuki training is parental involvement. To you, how important was it that you were involved?

About 90%, no, 99% wouldn't make it without the parent. I know our son wouldn't.

Do you have a musical background?

I had some lessons in my early 30s—about two years.

What rewards and challenges did you find in carrying out your role? Was it worth it?

The greatest reward is this: In the process, it has taught me many parenting skills, especially patience. Later, I looked back and felt good, that I hadn't let

him down. If I let him quit, then at 18, I would feel that I let him down. Later, when he's 18, he can do what he wants with it.

Sure, there were many times I didn't feel like it, but it was definitely worth it. We all have deeper understanding and appreciation for music. We go to outings and concerts together, and are able to talk about it intelligently together.

Do you see any extra-musical benefits from Mikey's musical training?

When he sees any musical performance, he respects that person because he knows the hard work that goes into it. This is very important. It will carry over into other areas of life. Another important benefit is being comfortable playing for others.

What about practice? How did you manage to keep it regular and fun?

Several things. The consistency of weekly lessons helped, of course. And the specific written instructions were critical. There was a book that I read when I was in a slump, How to Get Your Child to Practice Without Resorting to Violence (Richards, 1985; see Bibliography). I learned that it's the parent's responsibility. If it's not fun, it's my fault. I'm not creative enough. You have to make them like it.

I have a written calendar with 365 days on it. We write in each day how many minutes we practice. He practices about 1 hour a day, but sometimes we go away or something comes up. At the end of the year we add up the total and divide by 365. The answer is usually about 25 minutes! It shows how much you can accomplish in a small amount of time. Something written holds you accountable. He also gets a reward for every song he learns.

Do you think music listening makes a difference?

It absolutely makes a huge difference!

In your opinion, how important are the group lessons?

Very important: 1) on a weekly basis, he gets to perform for an audience; 2) he is inspired to become better. There is always someone better or worse than you are. You are encouraged, and you learn to encourage others.

How did you keep the motivation going?

Simply to have made a 100% commitment with a "no back door" decision. Mikey knows this. It's a high priority item—with no options—so you might as well have fun doing it.

For you, what was the most significant factor contributing to Mikey's progress?

Along the way, there are always rewarding stretches of growth, and they keep you going. You give a lot to it—it will give back to you!

Katie, 11 (Book 4)
Student of Peggy Swingle

FAMILY PROFILE:

- MOTHER: Barbara, elementary school teacher
- FATHER: Dean, systems analyst
- SIBLINGS: Anna, 9, plays Suzuki violin

7/31/97 - INTERVIEW WITH MOTHER:

At what age did Katie begin piano lessons?

4

Who initiated the idea of lessons (parent or child)? Why?

I [Mom] did. Kids are not old enough to make the choice. It was the first time I had ever stayed home so long (four years) and I needed something to focus on. And there was an old piano in the family

Would you say Katie showed unusual potential for musical training?

No. It took her five years to finish Book 1 (two years for Book 2; one year for Book 3). We just had to be patient because we would see some kids that just whip through it.

Why did you decide on the Suzuki method?

I had heard of the Suzuki method. Knowing it was a total parent/child immersion, and especially because it was classical. Since I had a jazz background, I decided to give it a try. We observed for one month. When I saw boys who were rough-housing while waiting walk in quietly for their lesson, I was thoroughly impressed with the discipline.

What do you think are the benefits of starting young?

Setting patterns. Their minds are so malleable. They want to learn so much. If you wait 'til they're eight or nine and you bring up the idea, and they say "No," you've goofed. Older children are less receptive to your making the choice. I think four is a great age, and the regularity of the school (2 times per week) was great.

An important feature of Suzuki training is parental involvement. To you, how important was it that you were involved?

It was very important, especially for non-musical parents like myself. I've learned so much myself right along with her—with the teacher's guidance.

Do you have a musical background?

Neither of us has a musical background.

What rewards and challenges did you find in carrying out your role? Was it worth it?

The biggest reward is watching the child accomplish each step. The biggest challenge is practicing without battles, getting ideas by reading and talking to others, making practice fun! Also, having two Suzuki kids definitely changes the family dynamic. It definitely made a difference. Also, the child will perform much better if you know the teacher, just like in school. Of course it was worth it!

Do you see any extra-musical benefits from Katie's musical training?

She's now very focused, not only in piano, but in other ways. She's a good student and a great reader. And she's great in math. She has also learned how to study.

What about practice? How did you manage to keep it regular and fun?

We didn't always, but we tried to do it in the morning. A set time is helpful, and playing games when they are younger.

Do you think music listening makes a difference?

Yes, absolutely! Kids easily learn songs they are singing every day.

In your opinion, how important are the group lessons?

They are very important for motivation, positive feedback, and a circle of friends. There is a very positive peer influence.

How did you keep the motivation going?

By having patience and not giving up.

For you, what was the most significant factor contributing to Katie's progress?

You're working with consistency and patience as you're pushing your child along, and at some point your child's self-motivation takes over. That's what happened with Katie. Now, this is a typical conversation: "Katie, haven't you practice enough? Don't you need a break?" Katie: "No, I want to learn this."

Theodora, 11 (Book 4)
Student of Peggy Swingle

FAMILY PROFILE:

- MOTHER: Lyn, newspaper reporter
- FATHER: Rob, freelance writer
- SIBLINGS: Only child

8/1/97 - INTERVIEW WITH MOTHER:

At what age did Theo begin piano lessons?

She had just turned 5.

Who initiated the idea of lessons (parent or child)? Why?

The parents. But Theo was always interested in the piano—we had an old spinet in the home and she always played around on it. Her Dad would always play with her. Even as an infant, her “playing” sounded musical.

Would you say Theo showed unusual potential for musical training?

We didn’t know. As it turned out, yes, but it took her teacher to show us that—in the course of the lessons. In fact, her teacher said she was difficult to teach; she was very strong-willed. She didn’t want to do anything we told her to do. At age four, she said she didn’t need lessons—she already knew how to play. The teacher asked her to demonstrate. She did, then she said, “But I can’t play the left hand.” When the teacher suggest taking lessons to learn the left hand part, she agreed.

Why did you decide on the Suzuki method?

I didn’t know anything about it. We really decided on the recommendation of a neighbor who said the teacher was really wonderful. Then we observed some lessons.

What do you think are the benefits of starting young?

I don’t know what she would have been like without the instruction. She’s exceptionally bright and I suspect the music contributed to that.

An important feature of Suzuki training is parental involvement. To you, how important was it that you were involved?

I feel it was absolutely necessary. It was difficult but fascinating to watch her develop. I don’t believe she would have learned anything if I just sent her off to practice. In Suzuki, there are specific tasks to perform—you’re not just left to sit there and wonder what to do. There’s immediate reward (praise) in perfecting a task, and the child hears when she’s doing it right.

Do you have a musical background?

I wish I had more. I took piano lessons in college. My husband, a cellist, comes from a musical family. My family were good singers. There was always music in the house.

What were the rewards and challenges in carrying out your role?

It's the most fascinating and rewarding thing I've ever done. Without it our lives would be "thinner." You hear their progress and it's really exciting! The biggest challenge is daily practice—finding creative ways to practice without brow-beating. A sense of humor is the key. Make it fun!

Was it worth it?

Absolutely!

Do you see any extra-musical benefits from Theo's musical training?

She's different from non-musical children that we know—more sensitive, more discerning. It all pours over into your life.

What about practice? How did you manage to keep it regular and fun?

We just relied on the teacher's excellent suggestions. It took about three years for her to become self-motivated.

Do you think music listening makes a difference?

Of course!

In your opinion, how important are the group lessons?

I see group lessons as a good way to present theory in a regular way. The group effort makes theory much less boring than it could be. It's a good way to reinforce musical training—by having friends who do the same thing.

How did you keep the motivation going?

It was largely due to the support and inspiration of the teacher.

For you, what was the most significant factor contributing to Theo's progress?

It changes with each age. At first, it was simple things like stickers, or rewards for X number of days of practice. Now it's internalized, where she wants to learn a piece for herself. It's just a marvelous method!

Lara, 9 (Book 3)
 Student of Peggy Swingle

FAMILY PROFILE:

- MOTHER: Kathy, registered nurse
- FATHER: John, chiropractor
- SIBLINGS: 1 sister, 12

8/1/97 - INTERVIEW WITH MOTHER:

At what age did Lara begin piano lessons?

6

Who initiated the idea of lessons (parent or child)? Why?

It was Lara. I had always wanted to play something, so we bought a piano when Lara was three. At age five she started traditional lessons with a family friend. This continued for three months. But she was around Katie (a friend and Suzuki piano student) a lot, and one day said to me, "I don't want to learn like this; I want to play like Katie."

Would you say Lara showed unusual potential for musical training?

She is a bright child. But at the piano she just fooled around. Three months of traditional training showed no special ability. In fact, there was no progress; it was just wasted.

Why did you decide on the Suzuki method?

We saw someone else's progress.

What do you think are the benefits of starting young?

My older daughter started cello at nine. I think it would have been better to start at about four or five. I see a difference. They get used to practicing every day. If they start older, they remember a time when they didn't have to practice.

An important feature of Suzuki training is parental involvement. To you, how important was it that you were involved?

I think it made a big difference.

Do you have a musical background?

No. This does make it harder, more challenging. It's not so bad at first, but at the higher levels, it's harder to help.

What rewards and challenges did you find in carrying out your role? Was it worth it?

I don't know much about music, but I love to see my children play. It's nice to see the self-confidence that comes out of it. I like to see them play chamber music with others. They really enjoy it. I like to see my older daughter do something she can do as well. It's a tough age. And, although it was hard to practice every day, it was worth it.

Do you see any extra-musical benefits from Lara's musical training?

Mainly, self-esteem and concentration. Our older daughter, who is left-handed, saw a lot of benefit at school. It becomes an extended family. The older students and adults are role models; their peers are interested in music and positive activities rather than some of the other garbage out there.

What about practice? How did you manage to keep it regular and fun?

It's a big challenge. We do practice, but there is no set routine. We just squeeze it in whenever we can. Sometimes it's not fun, but now they're starting to see the benefits. We try to give them rewards, like stickers, or going out for a treat. Kids like tangibles.

Do you think music listening makes a difference?

Yes, a big difference!

In your opinion, how important are the group lessons?

I think it's important. It's a very positive thing to see other kids get up and play. When they make mistakes, it's not the end of the world. They're very accepting of each other. Also, it reinforces the extended family idea. Lara loves it!

How did you keep the motivation going?

Probably a combination of teacher, and wanting to spend some valuable time with the children when I'm not working.

For you, what was the most significant factor contributing to Lara's progress?

It came a lot through teacher support. The group lessons also helped because they become self-motivated when they see others. It gives them something to look forward to, and they feel good when they succeed.

Patrick, 11 (Book 4)
Student of Marilyn Taggart

FAMILY PROFILE:

- MOTHER: Laurel, psychologist
- FATHER: Kevin, psychologist
- SIBLINGS: 2 older brothers

10/29/97 - INTERVIEW WITH MOTHER:

At what age did Patrick begin piano lessons?

7

Who initiated the idea of lessons (parent or child)? Why?

It was my idea. His two older brothers play, and I play, and his father plays. In our family we just feel that playing a musical instrument is not an option. It's more like, "What instrument do you want to learn?" as opposed to, "Do you want to learn one?"

Would you say Patrick showed unusual potential for musical training?

No, not at all. But we found very quickly that he would be talented. He kind of bypassed his older brother within a couple of months. He took to it very well, very quickly.

Why did you decide on the Suzuki method?

Somebody else whose child was doing Suzuki had talked to me about how wonderful it was, and I had read a little bit about it. It appealed to me. Really, a lot of it just was hearing what a wonderful teacher Mrs. Taggart was, so I probably wouldn't have cared what method she was teaching! I knew that she was a good teacher, and I had heard good things about Suzuki.

Did you have any previous experience with traditional teaching?

Yes, my first son did traditional. There was a huge difference. My second had started with traditional and then transferred to Marilyn, and it took her about six months to kind of undo the tight fingers and the hunched over posture and poor technique. Traditional kids, or my kids anyway when they were taught traditionally, weren't able to feel at ease with the piano and use their ears much.

How old were your children when they started traditionally?

Patrick was seven. He studied about 1½ to 2 years before he switched to Marilyn. I have another son who took traditional for several years, and then he went to Marilyn too. He started piano when he was six, and then he took it on and off. At 14 he stopped for a year, and then went to Marilyn when he was about 15. He could hardly read music at all, so she really worked with him. He was technically not so bad, but she had to work with him on a lot of stuff. I had a daughter that started too, and she quit after a year. She's the same age as Patrick,

and started at the same time as Patrick. She was doing fine, but it just was hard to get her to practice, and that became an issue.

I have another child who's in Suzuki right now too, but not with Marilyn because Marilyn had cut back. He's three years older than Patrick; he's in Book 3.

What do you think are the benefits of starting young?

I would love to have started Patrick younger, or all of them if I had known. I didn't know about it at the time. What I know about it now is just my research as a psychologist, that children who are exposed to music early, it really helps brain development, spatial development, and mathematical reasoning and a lot of other things. I just think it's a good thing. I would definitely have started them all younger.

An important feature of Suzuki training is parental involvement. To you, how important was it that you were involved?

It makes sense to me. When I think back to my son, my oldest, I would tell him go and practice the piano, and I wouldn't be involved in it, so he wouldn't progress as quickly. It's like anything—we're involved with our kids' homework when they're little, and it just totally makes sense that they're going to do better if you're sitting next to them and if you're reminding them. They're six, seven years old. I just think, logically, it makes no sense to not sit there with them until they're older.

Do you have a musical background?

I took piano as a kid, and I sang, on and off. I've learned more as an adult with my kids, and I've taken some lessons as an adult. I also played saxophone, but I started that as an adult too. My husband's grandfather was a violinist; my mother's mother was an opera singer; my grandmother played jazz, stride piano—she was into that. There was a lot of music. We've all grown up with the music of Fats Waller and stride; my grandmother could just sit down and play that.

What rewards and challenges did you find in carrying out your role?

Ah, the challenges! At one point, I had four kids in Suzuki. The time, and even now, that's hard. I'm at the piano an hour, at least, a night with the two boys who are still taking Suzuki. The rewards are just that, it's wonderful—it's time together, it's seeing their progress, knowing how my involvement is helping them progress. They both love to perform. Suzuki's made them comfortable with performances, I think, because of the group lessons. There's a lot of that; they're comfortable and they love to do it. It's just nice.

Was it worth it?

Yeah, no doubt.

Do you see any extra-musical benefits from Patrick's musical training?

Absolutely, he just started the clarinet and was able to pick it up and just start playing without anybody showing him. It's that ear training and feeling

comfortable with an instrument. He can read music; he's singing. And in school, he's very reinforced for his piano playing. People really admire it, and it raises his self esteem and makes him feel good.

What about practice? How did you manage to keep it regular and fun?

The fun part's hard, and I'm always trying new things with that. What we do right now is, both boys are doing 100 days in a row, and they get \$1 a day that they don't get until 100 days is up, that they can use how they want. They feel that they've earned their \$100 to go out and Christmas shop for the family. It can be for some other big thing like a bicycle that they want, or something like that. Last year, Patrick did over 300 days in a row, straight, of practice, using that incentive. They love it! I even got Patrick a pretend check book, and we put it in his account. It's his for things we probably could have bought them anyway, but this way, they're feeling like they're earning it through their practice, and that's paid off a lot for the both of them in terms of their playing.

Some parents question monetary rewards. As a psychologist, how do you feel about it?

You want them eventually to own it. You want that time to come where they want to go to the piano, or work on that piece, and not have it be because you're telling them to, or paying them to, or something else. But I think that comes when they're older. I think that intrinsic stuff starts to develop a little bit when they're older. It takes off after a certain point. If you don't get them to that point, it won't happen.

From the research I've done so far, I think that point comes when they're starting to get good enough to see the results of their efforts.

Yes, I agree. I'm seeing that with Patrick. I think that, in time, it does happen.

Do you think music listening makes a difference?

Absolutely!

In your opinion, how important are the group lessons?

I think it's important for the kids play in front of their peers. I just think group is part of the whole Suzuki idea of how children learn—kids learn in a group; they learn from each other. There's a little competition that happens too that maybe is not bad all the time, either. Although it's a pretty friendly environment, I think they're looking to see who's playing what. They seem to create their own sense of competition. I know there's one little girl who plays better than Patrick, and he's always keeping his eye on her. It gives him a push, so I think that's good.

How did you keep the motivation going?

The kids have been pretty good. They've never fought me a lot about it, I think just because, in our family, it's like doing homework or something. It's just something that they know is going to have to happen. It's just not an option. You have piano, you have homework, you have your sport, you have Sunday school—they're not options. It's just something that has to be done, so they don't fight.

For you, what was the most significant factor contributing to Patrick's progress?

I think the teacher. I think we happen to have a wonderful, wonderful teacher, and I think that's a huge part of the progress. She expects a lot from them, and I think that kids do what they're expected to do, I really believe that. We tend to have low ceilings for our children, low expectations so often, and Marilyn doesn't. She just expects it, and they do it. And she teaches so well.

It's also having the music in your house, going to concerts, and listening to all kinds of music in your home. My oldest son ended up working this summer for a harpsichordist. We have a harpsichord in our house, and the others would go up and listen to Bob's CDs—he's internationally known. It's just there. That's so important—the singing too, and playing all sorts of instruments—we just have all sorts of stuff going on.

Elias, 10 (Book 3)
Student of Marilyn Taggart

FAMILY PROFILE:

- MOTHER: Argie, restaurant business
- FATHER: Legrande, restaurant business
- SIBLINGS: 1 sister, Alik, 12

10/29/97 - INTERVIEW WITH MOTHER:

At what age did Elias begin piano lessons?

A couple of months before his 5th birthday.

Who initiated the idea of lessons (parent or child)? Why?

The parent. We are a musical family and just feel it's an essential part of education for a child, and the younger they start, we feel, the better. Having investigated the Suzuki approach, I found that the child's optimum window of opportunity for initiating lessons was in the 3 to 5 range. Also, Marilyn had an exceptional reputation. In fact, we were on a waiting list for a year before the children got in. We were here, probably monthly, observing so we could get ourselves higher and higher on that list. At that time she started with very young children and had a beautiful approach.

Would you say Elias showed unusual potential for musical training?

No, it wasn't because he showed any exceptional musicality.

Why did you decide on the Suzuki method?

In our observing, we really were convinced that this was hands above the way we were both taught, which is the traditional method. My husband's musical training, which started when he was 7, was traditional right through university, where he was a music major.

Did you have any previous experience with traditional teaching?

Our experience was personal in that my husband and I both had traditional training. My husband's went far beyond mine because he performed concert level in the Midwest before the restaurant business. But not with Elias or our older daughter, Alik. Neither of them had ever received any other lessons.

Can you describe the difference between your traditional and Suzuki experiences?

The parental involvement is enormous, and critical. That's what I see. Once again, I'm going to say Suzuki is hands above traditional. I believe if Elias had gone to a traditional teacher, he would not have flourished the way he has. He's extraordinarily creative, and not because I believe he's an exceptional child. I really have to underscore that. I think that this has done that for him, stimulated him to take that approach. He has a tremendous ear. The ear training, I think, traditionally, is not something that's emphasized at all, at least it was never for

me. To emphasize it at a young age, this kid was able to hum all of Book 1 before he could really even know what he was doing. And it isn't by rote.

That's the other thing I want to emphasize. Suzuki has such a bad rap with those who don't understand it, thinking that these are kids who never learn to read. Our daughter at 12 is a better sight reader than my husband at 50 with all his years of training. She can take a Chopin, or an early Beethoven, and pop it in front of her and she can read it. To me, that's astounding. The reading ability, I believe, in Suzuki is inserted at the right time. I totally buy Dr. Suzuki's philosophy, the "mother tongue," the child hearing and becoming comfortable with the piano, doing those early Book 1 pieces mostly by ear, and then, doing the early introduction to reading. Because Elias was 4, we did a lot with that. We had the flashcards; we would have the symbols of the different parts of the song, so he was, without consciously knowing it, learning how to read, but he wasn't reading the music, *per se*. I just think it's phenomenal.

The parental involvement was the other significant difference with Suzuki, and I think it's a real significant difference.

What do you think are the benefits of starting young?

Ear training is the first that pops to mind. The child's ear becomes so conditioned. Also, by the time Elias was only 6, he was performing, granted very rudimentary pieces, regularly once a month at group lessons in front of other children, parents. My children and most of the children I've observed in this area, have very low performance anxiety. I remember, as a child, getting ready for a recital and being absolutely frantic. These kids are so comfortable around other people seeing them play. That's a huge gift!

I just can't say enough for the early training. Our children also are bilingual, and I think that goes hand in hand. Each enhances the other—the language training, and the early music as a language. They know Greek, and they take Spanish in school. The school system they're in starts Spanish in first grade.

An important feature of Suzuki training is parental involvement. To you, how important was it that you were involved?

Very important, and that was a big selling point. After observing Marilyn for a year, we would just pop in—that was her procedure. If she saw that the family was genuinely interested, then she would consider them because she had a loaded schedule. The parental involvement, I think, is critical. I'm still involved with the kids in their playing. My daughter's just completed Book 5. She's very independent, but she enjoys us. The parental involvement evolves, obviously. What we were doing pre-Book 1 versus Book 5 is a huge difference, but our presence is there for the kids. It's essential. We know what's going on. What a difference! I remember just being dropped off at my lesson, and then picked up and told, "Did you practice today?" I could have bluffed my way through my practice and everything. The thing that I find intriguing, too, is that the kids, because we're here—and I think this is pretty typical, I don't think they're at all atypical—they don't even attempt to bluff the piano practice. They know that you were there; they know you're part of their whole process. I also have to say it's a spill-over. I heard at my first institute someone once said, You know, when

I leave here I feel like I'm parenting better all around. I agree with that. Every time I come away from a Suzuki summer institute, it does subtly carry over.

Do you have a musical background?

Yes. My first instrument was piano, then violin. I played violin throughout school for orchestras and such, was choral accompanist on the piano right through school, and classical guitar—those were my three instruments.

What rewards and challenges did you find in carrying out your role? Was it worth it?

Very worth it, still very involved—Elias Book 3, Alike Book 5. I have to say that the challenges come. I know they're there because I can remember being frustrated at times, but they're almost blurred. Once in awhile, when the kids have gotten frustrated when they've hit a certain milestone, that's been about the biggest challenge I've had to face. They've never been kids who have been real rebellious about not wanting to practice, or "I hate piano and I'm going to quit," or anything like that. Yeah, they hit their slumps, but again, I think that because of the parental involvement from the time they're 4 or 5 years old, it's a habit, it's ingrained. They know we're part of it and we talk about it, so it doesn't become a huge issue.

Do you see any extra-musical benefits from Elias' musical training?

Oh, yes, creativity, definitely very creative. Plus it has helped him focus in his own unique way. Why I say that is, Elias is a very deep thinking child. His teachers have commented consistently that—this year he's in 5th grade—he has an incredibly mature thought process. He has an ability to see the whole picture rather than just a little part of it. I'm certainly not talking a genius child or an extremely high IQ. Why am I tying this in here? I think it does tie in. I think there's a definite overlap. When you do these things when they're 4 or 5 years old, of recognizing patterns—this is a whole composition, here's a portion, here's how it sounds—they see the different aspects of the whole. I think his approach to anything, therefore, is looking at the whole picture. Also, both of my children are dancers and perform a lot. I think, again, it ties in to the musicality and the comfort level of performance.

What about practice? How did you manage to keep it regular and fun?

Regular is just a given. We pretty much set that standard in the house that, just like homework, just like anything, it's never been a discussion, Will we take piano? Will we continue? It isn't a discussion; it's a given. Will we practice isn't a question. Yeah, they try to, on occasion, get out of it in the sense of, "Let me get away with 10 minutes, let me just rush through my latest song." When they were young, it was real easy to keep it fun, particularly in Books 1 and 2, because there are so many games; there's so much stuff out there, and I was one to grab every resource book that Marilyn had. I would pore over it. We had the big board games. The advantage we had, I think, is that all four of us have that common bond—piano. So we could all play the board game.

Keeping it fun now is not something I think about. It's more their own responsibility. I'm more of a guide, an assistant, now. Alike's independence now is such that her Dad and I will just listen and not even be on top of her on the

piano, but way back somewhere else in the room. Rarely does she get to a spot where she asks for help. We try not to impose it on her. She knows that we're listening and that we've heard what's going on at the lessons. Habit—that's part of it. I think when they hit a level of late Book 2 and on, if you've instilled the right habits, it'll carry forward in their practice. By then they usually know how to approach it. We did a lot in the beginning years. I used to have these practice charts that I'd decorate with stickers, or rewarding with baseball cards for the baseball fan—a lot of rewards. Without parental involvement, you can't do that.

Do you think music listening makes a difference?

A big difference, particularly now in Book 3 and up. Elias is so auditory. He's working on a Kuhlau piece, so he has 3 CDs by 3 different artists. He'll listen to all three and he'll tell you, "This is how Kataoka plays it; this is how William Aide plays it," etc. He'll tell you very critically what he likes or doesn't like about each performance, or who's his favorite. It's that listening that allows for the subtlety. Last week when he played a piece for Marilyn, she said "Wow! With my eyes closed, it could have been a 16-year-old, not a 10-year-old," because he got those subtleties in there that he wouldn't have if he weren't a good listener, I believe. The listening so enhances the maturity of the sound with which they execute a polished piece. Without listening, a child's ability to develop their own style is hampered because they need to learn there are different styles. Imagine if a child is never exposed to listening and is just exposed to the printed page, how can they ever really know how to play by just looking? I think the listening is so essential.

In your opinion, how important are the group lessons?

Very important. To the younger levels, even more important. The group lesson has definitely been the major factor in their not having performance anxiety. They just don't, or very mild. The other benefit I see is just that, and this is big, the fact that the kids aren't isolated. Piano being such a big instrument, it doesn't have the portability, unlike orchestral or band instruments, so kids might not otherwise have the opportunity to interact with other kids their age.

How did you keep the motivation going?

Institutes, and I think the institutes are priced extremely affordable. The value we found, for example, was constant. We lived in the dorms, ate at the cafeteria. They would come home from an institute and be so supercharged for months talking about things that were done, or things different teachers said. If families can build in the institute experience anywhere, I think it's a real motivating facet.

For you, what was the most significant factor contributing to Elias' progress?

The teacher. I really have to say Marilyn has, as a teacher—and we have two teachers, my daughter is in flute—an uncanny ability to very quickly understand the personality of the child. I can remember my brothers, my sister and I all took from the same piano teacher. We had the same lesson when we were at a certain level. There was very little deviation to accommodate the child's own innate persona, and I think that's a gift of both the method and having a terrific, sensitive teacher.

Heather, 10 (Book 4)
Student of Marilyn Taggart

FAMILY PROFILE:

- MOTHER: Stella, seamstress
- FATHER: David, engineer
- SIBLINGS: 2 older brothers: 17, Suzuki piano; 15, Suzuki violin

10/29/97 - INTERVIEW WITH MOTHER:

At what age did Heather begin piano lessons?

I think she began at 7 or 7½. She was a little bit later because she plays the violin.

Did she start earlier with violin?

She started that at 4½.

Who initiated the idea of lessons (parent or child)? Why?

Piano is her idea. She was eager to learn to play the same things on the piano. Since she had already learned to read some notes on violin, she picked out some notes on the piano.

Would you say Heather showed unusual potential for musical training?

Not the violin. She was too young to really show any signs, on the violin especially, but we have a son who plays violin and we thought it might be good for her to take it. She didn't show it until she started playing the piano.

Why did you decide on the Suzuki method?

Because she was so young, first of all, and then the ear training, I think, is very important. The Suzuki method stresses that. Also, it was pretty successful with our other two children, who are older. My oldest started at 5—he didn't start on the Suzuki method, he started traditional. When we moved, we did some investigating and thought that the Suzuki method might be better, which he started when he was 7. My second son started when he was 5½, on the violin. He didn't want to do piano.

Did you have any previous experience with traditional teaching?

The two teachers that we had—the Suzuki method started with more ear training, and just playing the music, playing from memory, whereas the traditional method stressed a lot of reading. I think for our children it worked out better that they started with the Suzuki method because they had very good memory. They were able to play and advance pretty quickly.

What do you think are the benefits of starting young?

It develops many skills early, like memorizing and motor skills. Also, it becomes part of their life because once they start sports and other things, then it's too late. Their time is occupied with other things.

An important feature of Suzuki training is parental involvement. To you, how important was it that you were involved?

Very important, especially with my second son. I was with him every practice time right from the beginning. I practiced with him for at least three years, every day. He advanced, obviously, much quicker. I helped him practice, and I can see a difference between my oldest and the second one because the oldest one did not enjoy me sitting next to him while he practiced, so he didn't advance as quickly. He's very good at it, but he could have been better.

Do you have a musical background?

Very little. I sing. I don't play any instruments. I can read music.

What rewards and challenges did you find in carrying out your role?

The challenge is, I think, the relationship with your child. Sometimes it puts a strain. But it depends on the child because, with one I had a lot of problems, and with the second one, it was a very enjoyable experience. Because we love music, it conveyed to our children that it was important to us, and just the fact that I devote some time to practicing with them made them understand that it was important. It was a time that was always set aside each day for them to practice.

Was it worth it?

Oh, yes, I think it was.

Do you see any extra-musical benefits from Heather's musical training?

The consistency, persistence. I think that really helped her because if she didn't get a song, she realized that by practicing so long she'll get it. It's the same thing with studying. Also, when she was learning how to do headstands, I could explain to her that, like with music, if she practiced every day, eventually she could do a headstand. And that's what she did. She understood it because I explained it to her through piano.

What about practice? How did you manage to keep it regular and fun?

Heather is not the most fun. I guess we always made rules. For the boys, we didn't let them play Nintendo until after they practiced. But they did have the reward of playing. For Heather, she doesn't play with any games at home, but she enjoys playing with her friends, so we always say that she needs to practice before she goes out to play. She looks forward to going out to play by practicing.

Do you think music listening makes a difference?

Yes, it does.

In your opinion, how important are the group lessons?

They were important because, with piano, you never play in the orchestra or anything, so it's good to get together as a group.

How did you keep the motivation going?

Having the recitals helped a lot—something to work for. That's one incentive. And the books too, she likes to advance. They talk to each other at group lessons saying, "What book are you in?" It's kind of fun to see how far she's come.

For you, what was the most significant factor contributing to Heather's progress?

I can see that the teacher made a huge difference.

Dipali, 17 (Literature)
Student of Marilyn Taggart

FAMILY PROFILE:

- MOTHER: Suhasini, homemaker, physical therapist
- FATHER: Nimai, physics professor
- SIBLINGS: 1 younger sister, Suzuki violin

10/29/97 - INTERVIEW WITH MOTHER:

At what age did Dipali begin piano lessons?

She started when she was 7 with another Suzuki teacher, and discontinued for one year when we were away in Virginia, then continued again after that break.

Who initiated the idea of lessons (parent or child)? Why?

It was our idea, my husband's and mine. We both love Classical music and had always listened to it long before we had children. We come from India, and there we listened to very old traditional music. The style was different, but it was part of our school program. Dipali's experience is mostly with Western music, although she is exposed to some music of other cultures. It was something that we felt was natural—for children to learn music. But we were not thinking in any particular terms or reasons for it.

Would you say Dipali showed unusual potential for musical training?

No, I had no way of knowing what talent she had because we did not have a piano in the house. We did not ever hear her playing an instrument. She did have a very good voice. She sang in the choir and in school.

Why did you decide on the Suzuki method?

It just was a coincidence. Her first teacher, who was a Suzuki teacher, also happened to be a close friend of mine. Again, it was one of those things. We just took her to her because we knew she was very fond of Dipali and we did not do any research as such. It just happened to work out.

Did you have any previous experience with traditional teaching?

No, this is my first child and neither of us was traditionally trained in Western music.

What do you think are the benefits of starting young?

Seven isn't really young. Marilyn was surprised that we started, according to her, so late. I was surprised to see how many children were so much younger when they started. I did not think about it before; I didn't think I wanted to get them into a routine when they were young.

An important feature of Suzuki training is parental involvement. To you, how important was it that you were involved?

I think it was very important, especially when they were younger. That decreased with time as they became more independent and didn't quite need or want it.

Do you have a musical background?

Vocal music was pretty much routine and part of the school curriculum in the elementary and junior grades, and after that, you can drop it if you want, like here. Instrumental too, but not in school. I took it when I was at home for some time on the sitar, an Indian stringed instrument. I did that for a few years. My mother played it so we had one at home, but I was not as serious a music student as my daughter is. First of all, I was away from home, and it was a little more complicated, but it was not Suzuki style at all. It was not a daily practice.

What rewards and challenges did you find in carrying out your role? Was it worth it?

It was definitely worth it. The rewards were enormous. One thing you want from music lessons is that they should be at least appreciative listeners of Classical music. We didn't have bigger goals. But they should be educated in it and learn to appreciate it. I think that goal has been pretty much fulfilled and I think that is the biggest reward. Of course, we enjoy chamber music programs, so it's been very nice to see our children participate in that, too.

Do you see any extra-musical benefits from Dipali's musical training?

I think so. They started when they were 7, and that's when serious school started too, in 2nd grade. So it's hard for me to say. They have both simultaneously been students and musicians. It didn't come much later and then suddenly they improved. I do think one thing they have learned is to have a goal and to work at it. They've also learned to concentrate and be focused—for example, by working on these projects, how to plan and put it in action and see it to the finish. The other thing I find is that, because of the Suzuki way of perfecting something and polishing it until it shines, they are very critical, especially in musical terms, when people perform, even themselves. They know when something is right.

What about practice? How did you manage to keep it regular and fun?

They're pretty good kids, by and large, but although not perfect! When they were little, they had fewer distractions, like telephone and friends. It was not a problem. The problem started at some point when they did not want input. It was not like practice itself was a problem. It was parent giving the input. Part of it I understand completely—it happened because we taught our children to be independent in their school work and everything else. When they were small, they were not able to put this together, but when they were older, they saw it. Frankly, the more I stayed away, the more they came for my input. Even today, she asks me often for my opinion because I'm in the kitchen and she knows I can listen but I'm not right there. Also, she knows we're always listening to music and respects my opinion. I think she understands that we appreciate.

Do you think music listening makes a difference?

Yes, it does. I think it develops an excellent ear for music. Also, it became much easier for them to memorize the music. And of course it was good that the first pieces were small. I don't know if we did as much listening as some people

would do. I have to say that the children also outgrew that. I don't have to push her now because she likes it and wants to listen. But if I tell her, "You should do it," after awhile, she gets tired of it. She wants to do it on her own, no longer out of routine but because she wants to.

In your opinion, how important are the group lessons?

Very important. I think the children look forward to them, especially the social interaction. It was a fun thing. She liked to go and see what others were playing. A lot of time she has asked me if she could later play a piece she heard at group.

How did you keep the motivation going?

Over the years, we have always taken our children to as many concerts as they would come to. There came a time, last year, when she was the one who initiated the idea on her own. She was the one to make sure that we go, to make sure I got the tickets and things like that. And we listened a lot. They listen also a lot to their own music. They like to listen to quality music. If they know somebody is good, they want to go listen.

For you, what was the most significant factor contributing to Dipali's progress?

I can see that, for both girls over the years, the biggest incentive for practice is the recitals. Whenever practice would get boring at times, suddenly a recital comes along, like after a long winter. Anywhere that they have to perform, even a group lesson, it almost gives them a blitz. Now she loves to play the piano just for its own sake, even now that she's a senior and there are stressful times.

Michaela, 13 (Literature)
Student of Marilyn Taggart

FAMILY PROFILE:

- MOTHER: Joanna, director of private chemical dependency clinic
- FATHER: Douglas, director of private chemical dependency clinic
- SIBLINGS: 1 older brother, traditional piano dropout; 1 brother, 9, Suzuki piano

10/29/97 - INTERVIEW WITH MOTHER:

At what age did Michaela begin piano lessons?

4

Who initiated the idea of lessons (parent or child)? Why?

I probably decided to start her. A friend of mine who had a 4-year-old and a 9-year-old was going to be moving her 9-year-old to work with Marilyn and, since in the Suzuki method starting children early in piano is acceptable, we decided that we would start the little ones at the same time. They would start together and be buddies, so it seemed like a good idea.

Would you say Michaela showed unusual potential for musical training?

No. I don't recall that Michaela showed any talent in particular with music. But she is a very bright little kid with wonderful imagination and creativity. That was what was noticeable.

Why did you decide on the Suzuki method?

I had failed with an older child with the traditional method. He took lessons for two years, from ages 7 to 9 roughly, and when it didn't work out with this particular teacher who had come highly recommended, I thought it was his fault and my fault, and we just stopped. He wanted to stop. The teacher seemed in favor of that and so we stopped. Since that was exactly what I had done as a kid myself, something seemed wrong with that, so I wanted to do it differently.

Did you have any previous experience with traditional teaching?

Yes. As I said, we'd had a traditional teacher for two years with my older son, who did not succeed with music. He'd gone on to guitar after the piano and never really did much. And he did seem quite musical so I thought it was a great pity.

What do you think are the benefits of starting young?

It's mixed. She was ready, physically speaking, at age 4. She had decent manual dexterity as I recall. I could make a suggestion such as, "Let's start piano lessons," and she would say, "Sure Mommy, let's do it." When they're older, they're more independent-minded, so that's one of the advantages. But there are also some disadvantages, it seems to me. I did start one more child with Suzuki. But being a boy, and not having the same kind of dexterity and attentiveness of the same type, I didn't start him until he was maybe 5½. It's not that I think they

should start at 4. I think it worked out well for her, but probably it doesn't have to be that way, or maybe it isn't always a match for the child and their abilities and their interest.

An important feature of Suzuki training is parental involvement. To you, how important was it that you were involved?

It's turned out to be very important, but it's been important on so many levels, I just find it amazing. I was terrible at being a helpful parent in the beginning. I wasn't consistent with helping my daughter practice, and yet I immediately found benefits in watching a really fine teacher teach a child, and always emphasizing what was going well with what she was doing. I thought I learned a lot, not only about the piano and teaching piano, but also about parenting, from watching these lessons. But I had to learn how to go to work, have a couple of kids to take care of at home, and fit in lessons. It took me a few years to begin to get that down.

What rewards and challenges did you find in carrying out your role? Was it worth it?

I had to get more consistent whether I was tired or not. I want to add that I made her look bad before I finally mastered that. That sort of motivated me to get my act together because I didn't like the fact that it was my responsibility to help her to practice consistently and I was falling down on the job, and she was not looking so good. And she's a perfectly able little kid. But the rewards were terrific. It was a wonderful activity to do with her when we got to it. Also, to see the emphasis on ear training, which she took to wonderfully. She just seemed to love it, and within a very short time was interested in writing her own little pieces. Not that she ever wrote them down, but she would always remember the music.

I found it fun to be involved, as well as exhausting and a variety of other frustrating things. She did fight me with practicing at various points. There were discouragements. But I thought that Marilyn was always very helpful with these periods, so they never seemed like they couldn't be overcome in one way or another. I think that's a good perspective to have, not just with music but with most everything. It just fit with my value system and the kind of values I wanted her to have. There were many rewards of seeing her learn something. And when I finally grasped that it's a very complicated instrument that takes lots of years to master, I was kind of grateful that we started, kind of by accident, so young, so she had the chance, if we could manage it, to get pretty far with it. I thought she had a chance of having music as an avocational interest and satisfaction in her life. That would be really quite a wonderful thing.

Do you have a musical background?

I do have a musical background, but insufficient. I did take lessons about five years myself as a child. It was a pretty poor background, so I found it fascinating to learn piano along with her since I read music.

Do you see any extra-musical benefits from Michaela's musical training?

She is a fantastic student. She's just been a great student all along. And what's kind of funny, my husband and I both being therapists, we're not particularly

good at math, and she is. She wins contests in math. It's just fascinating to see. We read about music and children—I keep reading that it helps their math ability. Here's an example of it as far as I can tell. She has good self discipline, she's a very organized kid. Part of that is who she is and would have been anyway, but I think it's kind of accelerated it and made her more so that way. I also think it's been helpful in terms of teaching values as well as the skill of piano.

What about practice? How did you manage to keep it regular and fun? And how did you keep the motivation going?

We went to Suzuki institutes. I think when she was in first grade, we probably started after that year, and I think maybe we missed one year since then. I don't even know if we have. So, the institutes always remotivated us. Just concentrating on music for five or six days was always incredible. At the end of a year of practice and schoolwork, you can get tired out with all the routines, so it was nice to have that rejuvenation. In terms of practice, I've always found it hard because I'm not a routinized person myself, and I'm not terribly self disciplined. I managed to do the ordinary things, don't misunderstand me, but I don't come by doing something on a routine basis, every single day, easily. I've been so-so at it. That made her so-so at it for quite a long time. It wasn't until about 8th grade that I would say she was fully independent. Now she has her own goals. She told me tonight that she's practicing about 55 minutes a day. She decided she would do the Theory book in these last six weeks or so. So, somehow she's managed it. She's practicing sufficiently. She's obviously not one of these kids you brag about who practices 1½ to 2 hours a day, but for her level of interest and what she's doing with it, she's doing well. And she is consistent.

Do you think music listening makes a difference?

Definitely. We did a lot of listening. Marilyn really encouraged listening. We listened to the Suzuki tapes as we went along, and we listened to them a lot. I use them in the car, at bedtime. I do the same thing for my younger son who's 9. I think they make it easy so when they start a piece in Book 1 they already know the piece. They learn it faster and they're excited about learning it. They like the sense of mastery they have from picking it out when they don't really know it yet. We're not a tremendously musical family. We listen to some music. I listen to Classical music a lot in the car. I put some on at home, but not a lot. But I think it really is helpful.

In your opinion, how important are the group lessons?

I know that the kids like to hang out together and do things together. It's really nice for them, and they seem to have a good time; they seem to look forward to it. And I know when they were 4, 5, 6, 7, really for quite a few years, Marilyn always made sure that the kids close in age and level would have adjoining lesson. Even that was important, that they would play a piece together and keep up with each other about what was going on music-wise. I'm not clear on how it's motivating, but I think, because the piano is mostly a solo instrument, they certainly learn to play for each other. And their comfort in playing for each

other, I think, is wonderful. They share with each other. I don't know if it helped as much with theory and music reading, but that's never been a problem, either.

For you, what was the most significant factor contributing to Michaela's progress?

It's a mix of many things. Marilyn said when we first started that it would take about 4 years before she could tell how Michaela was going to take to this. Well, that cracked me up. It seemed kind of long to be able to tell that. And I thought that was a smart thing to say.

The other thing she said had something to do with setting appropriate expectations for the parent, which was that she would be taking lessons all through her schooling, at least through college. So we started a joke at home. She said, after a few months of lessons, "In September I don't want to take these lessons anymore. I want to take a different thing." I said, "I don't think we're going to do that, Michaela. I think you're going to be taking this until you go to college or you become a concert pianist, whichever happens first." I was kidding around about the concert pianist, but it would be a long term expectation, and I found it helpful that it was mentioned at the beginning.

I did read the Suzuki books, or quite a few of them, in the first couple of years, and I thought they set a good expectation. I just wanted her to have music, and it was obvious that was going to take a lot of long term work. It wasn't in depth all the time, but I just have to expect to keep plugging away at it with her for years. At first, I thought Marilyn was inspiring by saying this, but it was obvious to me that most things in life that are worth doing are long term projects, and so to have something where you learn that skill indirectly as a child growing up, I thought that's fabulous. I think there are a lot of ways to learn that, but I don't think that I learned that other than through being educated, which is a long term process of going to school.

Lina, 6 (Book 2)
Student of Marilyn Taggart

FAMILY PROFILE:

- MOTHER: Jolanta, homemaker
- FATHER: Bharad, mechanical engineer
- SIBLINGS: 1 younger sister

10/30/97 - INTERVIEW WITH MOTHER:

At what age did Lina begin piano lessons?

3½

Who initiated the idea of lessons (parent or child)? Why?

I showed her how to play “Mary Had A Little Lamb” on the piano and she picked it up very quickly. I started talking to my husband that maybe we should look for a piano teacher because she’s quite musical.

Would you say Lina showed unusual potential for musical training?

I think so. At least she showed that she was ready to have lessons.

Why did you decide on the Suzuki method?

Because nobody else would teach such a young child to play.

Did you have any previous experience with traditional teaching? Describe.

For myself. I played accordion with traditional method. The biggest difference, with Suzuki, you can start so early. With traditional, you start with reading music. With Suzuki, you are listening, so you can pick it up very quickly, but with reading, it’s more difficult. It’s so hard to have everything at the beginning.

What do you think are the benefits of starting young?

She was 3½ and doesn’t remember her life without her piano, I think. Every day she plays the piano. She knows already that she needs to play the piano. I started myself at age 7, and already you remember. When I was 10 or 11, already I was bored because I was still at the beginning after only 3 years of playing. At 10 or 11 she will be already in such an advanced way of playing that she will enjoy playing.

An important feature of Suzuki training is parental involvement. To you, how important was it that you were involved?

I think it’s very important because, every day, if it is not for me, she will not play by herself. We are playing together all the time. At the beginning I didn’t know how it will work because I thought I would leave her for ½ hour, but when I started going to the lesson and got myself involved, then I could see it.

What rewards and challenges did you find in carrying out your role? Was it worth it?

We all enjoy it. I enjoy it more as a parent than I did as a child. It's nice to see such a small child play nicely. I think we learned a lot, not only about the Suzuki method but about our child. I learned a lot about her capabilities—what she can do, what she still cannot do, how I should approach her, how she will develop. I can see her potentials and maybe what I need to change. Patience can be a problem, but I try to keep it going. It's a very important thing. If there's trouble, we will somehow solve it, but never go away from that. I think it was worth it.

Do you have a musical background?

Just the accordion lessons.

Do you see any extra-musical benefits from Lina's musical training?

She grasps things at school. It helps her. She's much more focused and can concentrate. It keeps her busy.

What about practice? How did you manage to keep it regular and fun?

When she started 1st grade, practicing became for us more difficult because before she got up first thing in the morning, brushed her teeth, and we would practice. She already knew that routine. School now starts so early that she doesn't have time. She would have to get up before 6 o'clock. Now, we are still working on the routine. When she comes from school, sometimes she feels tired and doesn't want to play, so I'm trying to find the time when she is at her best and can concentrate and play. At morning it was great. Now it's hard.

Do you think music listening makes a difference?

What she's playing is becoming familiar. She knows already. When learning a piece, she will say, "I already know this song," so it makes her more eager to learn to play. If they know the songs, they like them.

In your opinion, how important are the group lessons?

She could see how other children her age can play, what she knows and what she doesn't know at the time and, "OK I need to learn because everybody around me is already involved with it."

How did you keep the motivation going?

She likes it. She is very eager to show the younger ones. Today when it was time to pick up the younger one, she said, "No, I still want to play." Also, she loves her teacher, so every week we try to surprise the teacher by learning a special goal, like a small section hands together, or something like that. This motivates her.

For you, what was the most significant factor contributing to Lina's progress?

Practice. If she will not practice, she will not play like that. Every day we practice.

Wesley, 8 (Book 1)
 Taylor, 11 (Book 3)
 Daniel, 13 (Book 3)
 Students of Joan Krzywicki

FAMILY PROFILE:

- MOTHER: Sharon, teacher, mother
- FATHER: Daniel, teacher

12/17/97 - INTERVIEW WITH MOTHER:

At what age did your sons begin their piano lessons?

Daniel and Taylor started in Kindergarten; Wesley started in 1st grade.

Who initiated the idea of lessons (parent or child)? Why?

The parent. I did not know much about Suzuki method, just happened to go on a recommendation from a friend. Why? Because I was interested in getting music involved in my home. I had music lessons as a child myself, but my parents, because they were too busy, didn't really have time to commit to that, so I was interested in beginning that same type of thing in my own home.

Would you say any of your sons showed unusual potential for musical training?

No, I did not. I thought the discipline of learning a musical instrument was a good character builder for all of them. That's why I chose it, not because I thought they excelled in music.

Why did you decide on the Suzuki method?

It was a recommendation of a friend. They had really recommended Joan. I knew very little about the Suzuki method, but the more I learned, the more I liked it. Immediately you get wonderful results. At a very young age, your children can play very well, and I think as a parent, that was definitely a positive aspect of Suzuki.

Did you have any previous experience with traditional teaching? Describe.

I took traditional piano. There's a big difference.

What do you think are the benefits of starting young?

I guess you get your child at an early age to learn that it's a part of his routine, that music is something that is an important part of his life. I believe strongly that you don't give your child a definite option, and that if we didn't, they may choose to do nothing at all. I thought the biggest thing for Suzuki was that my children learned discipline early on. In addition to that, they learned to play in front of others so they don't have a fear of getting up in front of people. That's a skill I admire. They learn early on not to be afraid of that. If you wait until a later age, they might be apprehensive about getting up in front of people and playing. I guess I just liked beginning it and learning that this is a part of their life at an early age.

An important feature of Suzuki training is parental involvement. To you, how important was it that you were involved?

I don't have anything to compare it to. It's not that I can say I've compared it to traditional and I think this is so much better. It's the only way I've ever done it. As far as myself personally being so much involved, it's very time consuming if you do an excellent job. That's a hard question for me to answer because it's the only way I've done it. I don't know. I don't have traditional to back that up where you just drop you kid off and they go on their own and you just basically yell from the kitchen, "Are you done with that number?" I love being involved because I love being with my kids.

What rewards and challenges did you find in carrying out your role? Was it worth it?

My role is to be very positive and to praise my children for all of their accomplishments and to be an encouragement to them. The challenges are time. There's a tremendous amount of time. Each day I must spend at least 1½ hours sitting with my children at the piano. That's a large segment of time each day to commit. I'm getting better because now my oldest son can do more on his own. So I think the biggest challenge is: where are you going to find that amount of time each day? Another challenge is a continual amount of patience with your children. It's difficult—you want to be patient with them, you want it to be a positive experience, yet in the back of your mind you're thinking of a thousand other things that you need to complete. And so, to continue to make that a positive time with your child is a challenge. You want it to be enjoyable.

Rewards are wonderful! I feel that my children play piano very well. I feel another reward is that it's good discipline for them, that each day they have a commitment to spend a certain amount of time. Another thing I think is a reward is just to get up and see them play in front of family members, or at a recital, or just to sit at the piano and enjoy music. That's the most wonderful reward you could ask for. And their confidence—I think their confidence is unbelievable.

Do you have a musical background?

A very minimal musical background. I think I alluded to that earlier, that my mother was a working mother and did not have time to insist on my practicing, so I did it.

Do you see any extra-musical benefits from your sons' musical training?

I say discipline is very good. They're more disciplined children. I also think they have more confidence to pursue other instruments or other areas because they feel confident in this area.

What about practice? How did you manage to keep it regular and fun?

I had to do different things. One thing that I needed to do was, I always tried to do one child in the morning before school. I found that they were fresh and if you could motivate a child to get up regularly, I thought that the morning time was the best time. How to make it fun? I've done several things. I put candy treats around the living room and had them go out and pick a candy treat every

time they played a song well. I've had them have games of deciding which song they'd play first. I think you do that all at an early age. As the children get older, I'm not so sure you can make it fun. As I think of my 13-year-old, I don't know how I make his fun. Basically, he wants to do it and do it well and then be completed with his responsibility. Initially, you do need rewards. We would do things like, after mastering a couple of songs, they could have a certain treat that they were especially wanting, or something like that.

Do you think music listening makes a difference?

I certainly do. I think that all musicians listen to their music before performing, and I think it's wonderful to put that background into your child's head. I think as a parent, that's your primary responsibility, to always make sure that they're listening to the music as a background, never making a big deal about it, just whenever you have a minute, just push that button on that tape recorder. I think it's very important for them to know what the music is to sound like. My only concern is that you want the child to feel the music for himself and not to become a robot of playing a certain way. It would be good to listen to different artists playing your piece.

How did you make sure that the listening got done?

I think that you have to have a particular time each day. My time each day is every morning. When I wake my children up, I put their Suzuki tape on. Every night when I put them to bed, I put their Suzuki tape on. Those are the definites. I always do that. But in addition to that, if they're playing on the computer, I'll try to remember to do that. But I think that you have to have a particular time of the day that's just like an automatic routine. Otherwise, I think you could go several days without listening.

In your opinion, how important are the group lessons?

Group lessons are very important. I think the reason why they're important is, right away your child learns that he plays in front of other people and they become very comfortable with that group setting. It's no problem to get up and play. I've seen children in other situations with traditional piano that are just scared to death to perform in front of other people. And my children, they may get a little nervous, but basically, they're not. I'm nervous, but they're not nervous because they've done it from the very beginning. Also, for a parent to hear people at different levels, it's incentive to keep going. I think group lessons are excellent. They're a high point.

How did you keep the motivation going?

That's tough. It varies. Depending on the age of the child, we have always told our children that if they chose another discipline that would require this much commitment each day, they could change and not do piano any longer. So that was an option to say, "If you really feel like you'd like to try something else, that would be OK." As a parent, that was difficult because we were praying that they wouldn't. Motivation could be physical things. Motivation could be, whenever my children complete a Book, they could get a slumber party with all of their friends. Motivation, I think, is playing in front of their family members as much

as possible. If you make it a big deal, they feel so good about what they've accomplished. Sometimes motivation can be monetary.

For you, what was the most significant factor contributing to progress?

I think the progress of my children has a lot to do with my attitude in working with them. I hate to say that because it puts a lot of responsibility on me. Joan's attitude is very, very important. My attitude, though, I find when I'm pressured for time and I'm not as kind or as patient with the children, it's more difficult. So, I'd say the #1 thing is your attitude in making that a very positive thing. I say to myself, "Sharon, you only have this concentrated time with this child today, so you just better really make it the best you can." And I really try to do that, although I fail miserably a lot of the time, I do.

Peter, 11 (Book 4)
Elizabeth, 14 (Book 5)
 Students of Joan Krzywicki

FAMILY PROFILE:

- MOTHER: Rebecca, restaurant owner and graphic artist
- FATHER: Paul, restaurant owner and chef

12/17/97 - INTERVIEW WITH MOTHER:

At what age did your children begin piano lessons?

Elizabeth, 6, and Peter, 5 or 6.

Who initiated the idea of lessons (parent or child)? Why?

I did, because I studied all the way through college. It was a very important part of our education.

Would you say either child showed unusual potential for musical training?

No.

Why did you decide on the Suzuki method?

My daughter first had a year of traditional lessons, organized through her school. I was very dissatisfied with the program and with the final recital. There were a lot of Andrew Lloyd Webber tunes played, for instance. We knew the Krzywickis, so I called Joan and talked to her about it at length. I knew nothing about the Suzuki method, envisioning only 3-year-olds with violins on the stage. She convinced me to give it a try.

Did you have any previous experience with traditional teaching? Describe.

Yes. I started at 6 with a German-born teacher who studied at the Mozartium at Salzburg and was a concert pianist. My mother had played as a child. I took to it easily then because I was a very studious kid who kept to herself and had the discipline to practice. My mother was also able to practice with me for the first two or three years that I studied, which probably helped. My younger siblings didn't have that advantage, I don't think, and they all dropped it within three or four years of starting. I think temperament had a lot to do with it, too. I just liked it. I love the piano.

I also took flute starting about 4th grade. One summer I went to Interlochen. I decided then that I wasn't that serious a music student, although I enjoyed the summer very much. After junior high I dropped the flute because I didn't want to spend that much time practicing with two instruments.

I see a big difference between traditional and Suzuki training. I just love the Suzuki method. The ear training makes such a difference. I'll pick maybe a little something every year to learn, and I've started using the methods the children use—hands separately, listening, repeat, repeat, repeat. Their attention is so much greater. I played a lot of Bach when I was growing up, but it was so easy to lose your place in the middle. I had a lot of trouble. I can remember

specifically in certain recitals I'd just stop in the middle of a Bach piece and go "... Where am I?" With this method of learning, it gets in your bones. It's so remarkable for me to watch the second child who, three years behind the first, listened to her playing and her tapes, and how much easier it is for him because he had all the pre-listening. Plus, there's the involvement with other children and with other parents that you get with Suzuki. My kids are certainly not as committed to music as I was, but I know I couldn't have kept them at it this long without their exposure to the other kids. You're not alone out there playing the piano as I was growing up. I had no friends who played the piano. The get-togethers, and being able to talk to other parents for my part, have been helpful over the years. Also, the workshops that they've participated in. My teenager was ecstatic after going to England with the group.

What do you think are the benefits of starting young?

Mainly, getting into the pattern of practicing, the routine. They're maybe a little more respectful to their parents at that point. I felt strongly, even when I was growing up (I did really well in school), that learning to concentrate for a set period of time every day helped me study in school, so I could focus better. I didn't have to pull all-nighters in college to study. Even my 14-year-old has said that she thinks the memorization has helped her schoolwork.

An important feature of Suzuki training is parental involvement. To you, how important was it that you were involved?

Oh, it was very important. I would have been anyway because I was the one who initiated it, but I've had to back away. I'm not sure how this evolved, but in many things, my children don't learn well if they hear it from me. Basically, they pretty much practice on their own now. I'm in the kitchen, I'm in the room doing work. Maybe it's because I knew too much and it was like having a lesson every day, but they sort of resented my looking over their shoulder. I don't know.

What rewards and challenges did you find in carrying out your role? Was it worth it?

Oh, absolutely worth it, although some of our worst fighting occurred on the piano bench. For instance, when my daughter was in 5th grade, she was really unhappy in school, with her classmates. Something had been building for several years. Her grades started to drop in 5th grade. We just battled all the time at the piano, and many times she'd be in tears, I'd be in tears. Something had happened in school. Ultimately, she switched schools for 6th, 7th and 8th grades. It made a world of difference. She learned to take pride in her studies again and do really, really well. She's become really outgoing and social. I think the piano provided a forum, a time for us to battle, or talk. It was definitely a one-on-one-thing. I was there with her, and I'm not sure the stuff would have come out otherwise. Maybe it would have found another place to expose itself. It's been such a God-send. Without Suzuki, I don't know how we would have had the experiences we did.

Do you see any extra-musical benefits from your children's musical training?

Certainly the confidence of performing in front of other people. They're not as shy as I was about it because they do it more regularly, and with their friends.

It's a part of their daily schedule, although they still have to be reminded to practice.

What about practice? How did you manage to keep it regular and fun?

I didn't. They do practice the majority of the time. There have been tricks—tricks picked up at various workshops. We had charts when they were young and got to put stickers on. There were other charts with maybe 40 squares, and when that all got filled out, they could go out and pick out a CD or a tape that they wanted. Or they could watch a movie on TV—they watch very little TV because there's too much to do. They know that television never, never, ever goes on anyway without all the stuff being done. There are all kinds of funny little rewards.

Do you think music listening makes a difference?

I know the tapes don't get listened to as much as they should be, but, yeah, I do think it makes a difference because I don't think either of them is a great sight reader. But the things that they've heard, they can almost jump into, whereas I developed great sight reading skills. It's so interesting. Take, for example, a Bach I'll be working on now and, if I haven't played it in a month, when I start to lose my way, I can hear it in the back of my head, and most of the time I can find my place and pick up again, which is so remarkable!

In your opinion, how important are the group lessons?

Very.

How did you keep the motivation going?

My daughter used to complain bitterly, "When can I quit?" I'd say, "Do you want me to be like So-and-so's mother who just let her quit because she said she was bored?" Then we struck a compromise—she only had to study piano until she finished high school, or until she finished Book 6, and I think they may coincide. "But you'll have all this under your belt, so I don't care at that point. You're not going to get rid of it."

For you, what was the most significant factor contributing to progress?

I think was the teacher and—peer pressure, in a way. Peter had a little buddy move to California 2 years ago, but he studied here too. There was a very subtle rivalry—we knew it was there—between some of them: Who was playing what, and how are they doing? I'm sorry the kid moved because it isn't quite the same.

Amaris, 7 (Book 2)
Mathieu, 10 (Book 4)
 Students of Michael Jacobsen

FAMILY PROFILE:

- MOTHER: Theresa, housewife
- FATHER: Michael, electrical engineer

12/21/97 - INTERVIEW WITH ENTIRE FAMILY:

At what age did your children begin piano lessons?

Mother: Mathieu was 4, and Amaris was 3.

Who initiated the idea of lessons (parent or child)? Why?

Father: It was us, definitely. I think it was because both of us felt that we missed out on music education in our childhood. Because of our backgrounds, we always thought it would be a good idea for the kids to learn the piano, or some music.

Would you say either child showed unusual potential for musical training?

Father: No.

Why did you decide on the Suzuki method?

Mother: And also in the past we had friends who had children going for Suzuki method. We had been attending their lessons and the concerts, and we liked it a lot. We think it's a very logical method for them, especially for music. Just like a child learns to speak, first you learn to hear from the parents, then they just pick up and speak. Suzuki method is something like that. They learn from the CD; they've got the music in their minds so when they come to the piano, they can reproduce it onto the piano.

Father: And also, because we liked the music itself. It was very attractive music soundwise. I would not be able, I think, to stand the countless repetitions if it was a different music, if it was a boring music. We moved for a few years to Canada, and during that time we had a traditional method teacher for 2 or 3 months. We were exposed, unfortunately, to some music and method that was very boring and dull. The songs our son was learning were very dry and he began to lose interest.

Please describe your previous experience with traditional teaching?

Father: We lived in Canada for about four years, and at the very beginning we didn't have another teacher.

Mother: We were trying to look for a Suzuki teacher there, but we didn't know anybody. He had started Suzuki in the States, and for the first couple of months in Canada, because we didn't want him to have such a long break in his piano lessons, we decided to let a traditional teacher teach him until we could find another Suzuki teacher. We found a great difference. We didn't like the traditional method. We found that, from the beginning, they teach them notes,

which is so boring, just playing the notes from the book. And they don't get the music into their mind. They're sort of like a parrot learning from a book. And the child doesn't seem very interested, I think because he's very used to the Suzuki method. He doesn't have to look at any books. The music just comes through his mind and is reproduced back onto the piano. I think it's more creative in that respect.

Do either of you have any musical background?

Father: No, Theresa learned a little bit just by playing with the kids, but I unfortunately can't even strike one note.

What do you think are the benefits of starting so young?

Father: I think it's great.

Mathieu: I know! Because, you see, when you're young, your body's fresh, and when you get older, your cells die off, so you can't really get things quite easily. (Me: *How do you know this?!*) Because I'm interested in medicine and I want to be a doctor. Also, when you're older, you can't really play very fast. Mr. Jacobsen's been playing the piano for so many years, so he has trained his hands to do the reflex of playing the piano. But older people who haven't had any experience with the piano very young, they can't really do it. Also, when you're growing, you tend to learn things really fast compared to when a person gets older. In speech, you learn a language when you're young, but when you get older, you can't really learn another language. It's hard to pick it up.

Father: On the topic of learning things young, and perhaps studying the Suzuki method with other disciplines, I have a sort of a hobby which is the game of "Go." It's a board strategy game. I taught both of them very young. Essentially I used kind of a Suzuki method, to the extent that I understand it. I did not explain any rules to them. I was just doing it by imitation. They both can play pretty well. Amaris sometimes surprises me.

An important feature of Suzuki training is parental involvement. To you, how important was it that you were involved?

Mother: I really enjoy doing it with them. I learned a lot. I didn't know anything before, but now I can play the right hand of most of the Book 1 songs. I find that, when the parent is involved, the child gets more interested with the practice. I think you help them along the way.

Father: I don't get involved directly in their learning that much except sometimes as an audience. Most of the burden of teaching them lies with my wife.

What rewards and challenges did you find in carrying out your role? Was it worth it?

Mother: The reward is that I'm very happy to see them doing so well in their piano practice, and the hardship is, you really have to push them from the beginning. But now, I don't really have to push them too much because they've gotten into a routine by themselves. I just have to remind them every day, "OK, it's time for piano." They just jump to the piano and do it themselves, and I just sort of have to be there to give them support. I think the effort is very worth it.

Do you see any extra-musical benefits from your children's musical training?

Mother: It develops their mind. It helps them in other things, too. I find that, once they learn one instrument, especially the piano because it's the most difficult instrument, it's easy for them to pick up a second instrument. Now Mathieu is taking the clarinet in school. He just picks it up like that! He already knows the notes, so all he has to do is find the keys on the instrument and play it!

Father: I think it helps them a lot to develop concentration, work habits, and so on. It really makes a great difference if they have to concentrate one hour practicing. It helps, by extension, in other fields.

Mathieu: It makes me feel alive! You feel that you can do something that's good. Also, it helps me develop concentration, like my Dad said. And it's beneficial to other subjects, like math, in school. That's because when you read notes at the piano, and when you're dealing with numbers, it's a similar situation. Also, it helps you when you try to learn a new instrument. It's easier.

Mother: Not only that, I think it's a good occupation for them. Instead of running out on the streets, they're doing something useful.

Father: Another thing is, I find it made a great deal of difference for us. Because we are involved in this kind of music world through our children, we go and see places that we usually would not go—we go for concerts; we go to operas; we go to concert places which are very pretty and nice and kind of unusual.

Mathieu: Also, I find that Classical music is better than rock. When you listen to it, it sounds a little more rich, not in the sense of having more money; the music is much better than crazy music like rock-and-roll. It's more complex—it gives more sound, more volume. Rock-and-roll is so repetitive; Classical music has repetitive places, but it has a lot more tunes into it—a lot of more detail.

Amaris: I saw skating on TV, and they had rock-and-roll music, and the skating people, they were going crazy on the ice. (Me: *It does affect your behavior.*)

What about practice? How did you manage to keep it regular and fun?

Mother: Good question.

Father: Practicing is always fun.

Mother: I think at the beginning it might be very difficult, but now, especially when they're doing Book 2 and Book 4, they enjoy the music so much that they just enjoy the practice. I know sometimes it's very frustrating for them when there's a difficult piece. Then I try to encourage them. I say, "Oh, come on, be patient now. I know it's very difficult at this part. In any music, parts can be a bit difficult. You just have to take it slowly. Just do it over and over again many times just on that part, but don't go onto the rest, just that part you find difficulty in." I try to encourage them in that respect.

Father: I think once the routine is established, it's not so difficult anymore.

Mother: Sometimes I say, If you do this, then I let you watch a movie.

Mathieu: She doesn't do it often, but that really counts. Also, we get to give the audience a show. And Mr. Jacobsen, he can make such good music now.

Do you think music listening makes a difference? How do you make sure it gets done?

Mother: Every day we switch on the music early in the morning when they are having breakfast, or the minute they are up. When they come back from school, I just switch it on. And when they are doing their homework in the evening, I just switch it on. All the time it's on, so the music is there all the time.

Mathieu: You can hear the beat. Also, you can pick it up faster than when you just have the notes in front of you.

Father: Also, I noticed that, even though they are not consciously paying attention to the music which is in the background, they frequently hum along with it, or sing with it, even though they are doing some other work. Their mind is occupied by it on a secondary track.

In your opinion, how important are the group lessons?

Mathieu: You get to practice with an audience because there are many people sitting around you, so you just go up and bow, and then you get to play a piece in front of the audience and you feel more confident when it comes to the concert time. Also, you learn other things from Mr. Jacobsen, like notes and scales.

Mother: I think it's good for them because they can see other children playing the piano, the Classical music, and I think it encourages them to do it even more.

Father: Children do what other children do by imitation, so when they see that, they enjoy it more.

How did you keep the motivation going? It sounds like you didn't have to worry about it.

Father: Just some occasional moral support.

For you, what was the most significant factor contributing to progress?

Father: I think it's the teacher. We've been quite fortunate.

Mathieu: To have Mr. Jacobsen as a great teacher!

Mother: Also, I think that, since the kids have started with Mr. Jacobsen, they've improved a lot on their techniques, and Mathieu has calmed down a lot. He is playing a lot better now—not so stiff, you know, and he's more relaxed.

Mr. Jacobsen: I want to interrupt because this is important. If you think about how long the kids are going to be here every week, they come once every week. But then how long are you at home with your parents every week? So, who's going to have a bigger influence, me or your parents?

Mother: I think both, but having a good teacher helps a lot, too.

Father: I think the teacher makes a big difference—he's such an inspiration.

Mr. Jacobsen: But it will all fall apart at home if the parents don't help it out.

Father: My wife's effort in all this is very great, but I still think the inspiration of the teacher is extremely important.

Johanna, 13 (Book 3)
Student of Joan Krzywicki

FAMILY PROFILE:

- MOTHER: Monica, musician
- FATHER: John, music director at a college
- SIBLINGS: Unknown

1/6/98 - INTERVIEW WITH MOTHER:

At what age did Johanna begin piano lessons?

She started traditionally at about age 8, and started Suzuki at age 11.

Who initiated the idea of lessons (parent or child)? Why?

It was both of us together, and I did, not knowing it at the time, a Suzuki style of involvement with her when she was younger, you know, playing piano by ear, around age 5. Then I decided she should have a teacher, and she went into a studio at age 8—by my direction.

So she was actually quite prepared for the lessons by you, wasn't she?

Yes, but I didn't know that what I was doing as a parent was the Suzuki way.

Would you say Johanna showed unusual potential for musical training?

She did have a very good steady beat, and a sense of melody for a young age.

Do you think your being a musician had something to do with it?

Yes.

Why did you decide to switch to the Suzuki method?

Her piano playing was a little disjointed musically. The phrases were chunky and not smooth. They were awkward-sounding and rhythmically not accurate—just not a complete piece. I had heard about Joan, and when her former teacher moved to another state, we were looking for a teacher. Joan had been recommended for years. Also, I was interested in the beauty of the music that the young children performed in Suzuki lessons, whereas in traditional lessons—and in the recitals—all the students seemed disjointed, rhythmically and musically.

Besides this observation, could you describe more of your previous experience with traditional teaching?

Musically, when students at a young age learn to read notes, they're not hearing with their ear. Take, for instance, a melody line in the right hand, if there's a difficult fingering, or a difficult rhythm, traditionally students will stop and not continue that line. As a young person myself, for some reason, I was able to accommodate that at a very early age. I was able to perform by reading only, with hardly hearing what I was doing.

I know you're a musician. Could you tell me some more about your musical background?

I started at piano at 8, and then went to the flute in 4th grade—only in the summers. For four summers I played the flute in a public school setting. I went to Catholic school so we didn't have a music program. I'd forget everything all year, and then have to relearn everything in the summer. But I enjoyed it. They in 8th grade, my parents bought a flute and I played around with that for awhile in the high school band. I continued to play piano all through grade school and high school, and then in junior year, studied flute seriously while continuing piano. Then, in college—I took Music Ed./Music Therapy from Temple—I also started playing the organ. I trained on the organ for two to three years, and I started getting jobs in churches. I've maintained all three instruments through the years. Now I'm working as a freelancer and as a church musician in the area.

I understand you have some Suzuki training too, right?

I took levels 1A and 1B.

Are you planning to teach Suzuki at some point, or do you just want to be familiar with it?

I'm still learning about the transition from ear to eye. I'm a bit uncomfortable with it because I've seen students who did not make the transition easily—from listening to learning by reading. [My comment: I personally understand it this way: If the transition is gradual and consistent, and started early enough, it should not be a problem. In fact, I like to think of it as an accumulation rather than a transition.]

As we've already discussed, you and your daughter didn't start formal lessons at a really young age, but what do you think were the benefits of your working with your daughter at the piano when she was rather young, that is, at age 5?

I think that it would be great if everybody could do that with their kids! They just have a better appreciation, I think, and have a better ear. And when the discipline of note reading shows up, you can only hope that it won't be so much of a struggle.

An important feature of Suzuki training is parental involvement. To you, how important was it that you were involved?

Very important.

What rewards and challenges did you find in carrying out your role? Was it worth it?

Rewards were maintaining contact with my daughter, and musically growing and watching her grow. Also, being part of a group and having musical discussions—about interpretation and musical phrasing—and seeing her develop in intellect and maturity. It's very close. You can really develop a musical relationship with your child.

Do you see any extra-musical benefits from Johanna's musical training?

Yeah, especially the discipline of the more difficult work in Book 3 as they progress. I can relate to that because I've done some of my own research into

music learning. I'd say to Johanna, "You have to repeat this section here." This is how the brain has to work to learn in other areas as well.

What about practice? How did you manage to keep it regular and fun?

Johanna's pretty much maintained that on her own. I'll have very few discussions during the week. I'll remind her, "Did you do this? Did you that? How about your scales?" I don't have to do much more than that.

Do you think music listening makes a difference? How do you make sure it gets done?

Johanna has a CD player in her room. I bought her that last year so she would have one available. We also have a CD in the living room area. She's pretty good about it, but I usually remind her to make a tape so that she'll have something up in her room and something downstairs. She'll listen to it over and over in her room, especially when she has a new piece. She doesn't listen to it very much after she's learned it.

In your opinion, how important are the group lessons?

I haven't been to them. Johanna goes by herself, so I don't really know. Johanna complains about going, but when I pick her up, she seems to have had a good time—and she does learn things. We just talked about it yesterday. I think she's kind of older in the Book 3 group. She started Suzuki sort of late, so all the kids that are in Book 4 are older than her. I'm not really sure why.

How did you keep the motivation going?

I didn't really have to. It's just there.

Did she want to switch to the Suzuki method?

She did, because she had been to Joan's studio with her friends.

For you, what was the most significant factor contributing to Johanna's progress?

Again, her melody line was more fluid, with awkward fingering and rhythm accommodated by ear training. Because she had heard the pieces, she was able to adapt the difficult fingerings and rhythms more quickly. It wasn't as frustrating, so that often kept her in piano. And it was more pleasing to her to hear herself play.

Allyson, 12 (Book 5)

Noah, 11 (Book 2)

Students of Bruce Anderson

FAMILY PROFILE:

- MOTHER: Ginny, interior designer
- FATHER: Larry, retired

2/8/98 - INTERVIEW WITH MOTHER:

At what age did your children begin piano lessons?

Allyson began at age 6½, so she's just coming up on her 6-year mark. Noah started at age 8½, so he's just finishing 2½ years.

Who initiated the idea of lessons (parent or child)? Why?

Parent's idea for both, basically because I have a very strong music background myself and I think it's very important to the development of children.

Did you think that either Allyson or Noah showed unusual potential for musical training?

No.

Why did you decide on the Suzuki method?

It was kind of by chance. Actually, when Allyson started piano, it was just out of convenience. Both of the children, when they were young, went to a Montessori school. They had a music teacher who came in two or three days a week and would also give private lessons right after school, so of course it was convenient. That's how I started Allyson there. I didn't know a whole lot about it at the time. I just looked at the literature and I thought, well, this looks fine, and, having a music background takes a little bit of the concern away because I figured that right away I'd probably know if I liked the technique or didn't like the technique.

Did you have any previous experience with traditional teaching?

I was very traditionally trained at the Boston Conservatory of Music, and although I was a voice major, I was a piano minor. It was a very traditional learning, although I only had two years of piano.

Could you describe your traditional experience?

I don't think I can answer that question very well because when I was studying piano, it was by total immersion at a pretty advanced level—they expected me to be fairly proficient quickly at a lot of basics on the piano. So, what I found myself doing is playing catch-up just to catch up to what other people were doing if they were doing piano as a minor. I was doing lots of scales. I never had any training before this. This was private lessons—pretty intense. I even had a jury at the end of the year. I had to play in front of twelve people.

What do you think were the benefits of starting young?

I chose not to start them at age 3 or age 4 because I just felt that I was not going to have the patience to sit and work with a young child who didn't have an attention span of more than five minutes. It was just going to be more than I could handle—so I just waited. Also, from my observation over the years, as I've watched Mr. Anderson and Marguerita teach the little children, particularly those who have older siblings who have progressed on, I see these young children staying on the same music. Granted, I know they have to learn right hand and then left, and then how to put it together. I understand that. But some of these kids, if they start at age 3, are still in Book 1 by age 6½. I just find that terribly tedious.

I've watched both of my kids, having waited until the time was more appropriate and their attention span would be better, their coordination would be better—just an overall roundness that wouldn't be there when they were younger—they just caught on so quickly. My son has some learning disabilities, so this has been really good to channel him. My daughter goes to a school for advanced students, so I have one on one end and one on the other end. I really doubt sincerely, even though Noah started even later than Allyson, that either of them could even think of a time when they didn't have piano.

An important feature of Suzuki training is parental involvement. To you, how important was it that you were involved? I understand your husband is also involved.

I have been the one to go with Allyson all these years. I did start Noah, and then my husband took over. He had limited musical background, but enough to certainly go through, at least to the point we're at now. He's still doing fine. When they have a problem, they either ask me, or they ask Allyson.

I think the parental involvement is critically important when they're young. I could side-step and mention that my daughter has recently left Mr. Anderson and is studying with the head of the West Coast Symphony. Here, he heads up the whole piano end of the Florida West Coast Symphony. He travels and is an awesome performer. But he refuses to let me go into the lessons, and that was real hard for me. So she brings a recorder into the lesson and I listen outside the door. I then listen to the tape later. His philosophy behind that is that when the child gets to a certain age, it's really important to develop a relationship with the teacher and that the parent needs to back off in order for the teacher to step in. I still work with my daughter, but he just physically will not let me come in. I can watch through the door—there's a window.

A lot of success at our home is driven by total parental support—and a parent that has musical background. I think that it would be very difficult—I can't imagine being a parent that didn't have musical background and trying to work with either of my children. I'm sure I would find that very frustrating. I know other parents who do. They say, "I can't help my kid."

What rewards and challenges did you find in carrying out your role? Was it worth it?

I'll start with the challenges. The challenges are like I would imagine most parents have, and that's just keeping the child motivated, trying to have relatively peaceful and calm and happy practice sessions. I have done all kinds of games, given all kinds of rewards and incentives, and done whatever I've had to do to get a good practice time out of my daughter. All of the different things that

I've tried have been successful in different ways, but at different ages. I can't speak for my husband and Noah, although I've had to intercede when it escalated into some nasty arguing all the time, and getting my husband to back off a little bit, but then I can't step into that one. But my son's a different kind of kid to work with, and that's more challenging, I imagine.

As far as rewards, it's totally rewarding to me, from the standpoint that I feel that I gave up my musical career—I chose to do that—and it was a profound career. I did a tremendous amount, and I just felt that I wanted a different lifestyle rather than what the performing arts offers. I feel rewarded because Allyson and Noah are able to express the beauty of music through their playing, and it's very gratifying, when you put a lot of work into really helping spur them along, to see them doing so well, especially when I see Allyson perform. She's a wonderful performer. Audiences just love her and she loves to perform. It's really very special.

Do you see any extra-musical benefits from your children's musical training?

Definitely self-confidence. I think it sets up a very good work ethic for learning to get out what you put in, and they both definitely understand that, in order to be proficient at a particular piece or pieces, a tremendous amount of work goes into that. That carries over into other areas because they understand the amount of work that it takes to make something good. It helped my son tremendously with concentration. I remember when he first started piano. I could get him maybe to concentrate about 12 seconds, literally. We could expand that to 20 seconds, then we expanded it to 30 seconds—we went in second increments with him. With my daughter, it started with 3 to 5 minute intervals, and would increase by 5 minute intervals until I was finally up to an hour—it happened over years, not overnight. My son can do a good 30 to 40 minute practice now.

What about practice? How did you manage to keep it regular and fun?

I would have a chart with stars on it, for example. When she was younger—for the first 1½ to 2 years, I would do different things, like, she would get stars for so many repetitions of a measure or measures, so many more stars if she would practice a certain length of time, without complaining. That was always the requirement for Mom, to do it without complaining. You could sit there for an hour, but if you complained, it didn't count. After she had so many stars, she would maybe gain an extra half hour of a video a week—we have never allowed TV in our house; we maintain videos. I would have a little jar, and I would have pennies and nickels. With so many minutes came so many pennies, and when she had so many pennies, she could trade them in for nickels. When the nickels added up at the end of the week, I would make sure that I took her to a store so that she could buy something with her nickels—that always worked. Some people call that bribery, but I don't care what they call it because my children saw the reward. Ultimately, they derived more and more satisfaction from being able to perform, so my having to do tricks with her at an older age isn't so imperative. However, what I do on a very regular basis is, I give her days off from piano. My daughter also does violin and jazz piano, so she has three different music teachers. We juggle an awful lot now, so I try to do a day off every sixth day if I can, unless we're really pushed to the wire—there are no

days off right before a performance. I am not a believer in the “100 days” club. I think everybody needs a mental break. If Allyson knows she’s got a day off coming up, she’ll work real hard. It motivates her.

Do you think music listening makes a difference? How do you make sure it gets done?

Music listening is crucial for a child, I think, to move along at a more rapid pace. It’s going to be awfully hard if they’ve certainly never heard a piece, but I’m going to assume that most people would make sure their child has heard a piece before they’re going to work on it and at least know somewhat what it sounds like, but maybe not. I don’t know. In our house, we aren’t regular listeners of music. It’s been very sporadic. But just recently my son has been asking for the tapes and he puts them in the car no matter where he’s going. He goes upstairs and tries to figure out the upcoming songs by himself—by ear! I keep an eye to try to help him with the fingering. He’s advanced extremely rapidly in the last four months. I attribute it to listening.

In your opinion, how important are the group lessons?

For my daughter, the benefit was mostly social, but for Noah, they were tremendously motivating.

For you, what was the most significant factor contributing to progress?

Parental involvement!

Julianna, 11 (Book 4)

Haley, 9 (Book 1)

Students of Bruce Anderson

FAMILY PROFILE:

- MOTHER: Cynthia, bookkeeper/homemaker
- FATHER: Mark, electrical contractor

2/11/98 - INTERVIEW WITH MOTHER:

At what age did your children begin piano lessons?

Julianna began at 5; Haley began at 6.

Who initiated the idea of lessons (parent or child)? Why?

With both of my children, it was the child. Julianna had always gone to the piano, always played around the piano, and she began, I would say, as early as 3½ asking for lessons. I actually felt it was too young so I did not do it. Haley just followed into Julianna's footsteps once we went into the Suzuki program.

Would you say either child showed unusual potential for musical training?

Julianna did.

Why did you decide on the Suzuki method?

We started the traditional one and I knew that she had such a natural love and desire to play, but within 8 months she no longer wanted to take piano lessons. I just felt something wasn't right. She was able to do exactly what was asked. I was told that she was excelling at a very fast rate, but she just lost interest—she didn't want to do it. I knew that there was a problem. I didn't know exactly what it was. I had heard about the Suzuki method and began investigating and researching it.

Did you have any other experience with traditional teaching?

I took piano lessons for about 5 years as a child. I started at about age 8. And really it worked to our benefit because I'm able to read music.

What do you think are the benefits of starting young?

Actually, Haley may have been 5 because she had to quit when she was 6 because she was diagnosed with cancer, so she had probably a year under her belt. I think there are different areas of benefits. One of the things that I love the most now about Julianna is that over the years we have developed a closeness through music, and as busy as she is with all her friends and activities, we still have this music that we just join in together. We just went to see the St. Louis Orchestra in Clearwater and it was wonderful for the two of us. It's a bonding—the earlier you bond, the better. I think the benefits as far as Julianna went, there was just a great excitement there, especially with the Suzuki method because the younger kids are involved with the older kids. They're playing at a lower level, but they're treated equally—they're all treated with the same respect, the same

expectations as far as practice goes. Even though one is practicing something so very basic and the other very advanced, they're still treated very grown-up and I think that makes the child feel special. I think every child likes that.

An important feature of Suzuki training is parental involvement. To you, how important was it that you were involved?

I felt it was very important because I felt that the basics is what Suzuki training is all about—the posture, the hand position. I felt that young children needed the parent beside them to encourage the proper posture, which my children really do have. I think that what the teacher asks at the lesson is really asked of the parent—the parent does not teach the child, but the parent just reinforces what the teacher teaches. Even to this day, it's always known when I'm not at that piano. It's not taken lightly. I think I need to be there, and I want to be there. I enjoy being there.

What rewards and challenges did you find in carrying out your role? Was it worth it?

Very much so, it was worth it. I'll tell you one of the biggest challenges I find, and I can say this because I don't have anyone here listening, is the way people perceive piano. You take a boy, you put him on a football team, they expect that child to be at practice. And they encourage it—sometimes three hours a day, day after day after day. You take a child and you put him on piano one or two hours a day, which Julianna used to do—we don't do quite so much—and people look at you as though you're very cruel whether the child's enjoying it or not. Somehow, what's perceived between one sport and music lessons is that there's supposed to be some kind of different book of ethics or something. I find that is a big challenge. It's always always uncomfortable when either side of the family comes to visit, that I should take time out to make this child do piano. And I say “make” because I do make mine go to the piano. If we get there and they don't want to be there, and it's very obvious, then I try to be very sensitive and just do something so we can say we've been there. It's a big challenge and it bothers me very much.

I think the rewards are, with Julianna, we've spent a lot of time at the piano hugging. Now that she's grown up a bit, we spend a lot more time maybe in little disagreements now and then because she's just at that age where she's changing, but a lot of my quality time has been on the piano with my daughter. I just had a birthday Monday, and the gift that she gave me, she printed this little card on the computer and it says, “I will always play piano for you.” I think that's something we have that's very special. I see the reward as being close to my children—and they get to feel good about themselves.

One more thing—we studied for awhile with another Suzuki teacher who put both Julianna and Haley in a contest. Well, I didn't like it; I didn't want any part of it because I thought I'm going to have possibly an unhappy child 'cause one's going to do better than the other and I didn't want that competition. But I felt like I had to this, so both of them entered the competition and both of them won First Place. That was a reward! It was such a wonderful day for both of them—they felt so good! I think that's a reward, to go after something and take it.

Do you see any extra-musical benefits from your children's musical training?

Very much so—and it's very different with Julianna and Haley. I see two totally different benefits. With Julianna, she excels in math and she scores very high in the tests that are given. I believe that came from her music. One of the basic of things in Suzuki is that you take a piece and you may look at one measure and you learn how to practice that one measure. On that measure you build to the next one. She can take a paper—maybe something as simple as a book report—and she knows how to start with the basics and add to it. I think she has learned that through her music because that's really one of the things that interested me with Suzuki, that it was going to be expanded in all areas. I do see that with Julianna. She's able to really look at the detail of something and then expand on it.

Now, with Haley, a year-and-a-half into chemotherapy, she was well enough to get back on the piano and very much wanted to. With her, my concern was that I knew a lot of the chemo agents could cause learning disabilities, and she had already missed an entire year of school. I strictly put her back on the piano—and she doesn't know this—to exercise the brain. I felt it was very important. I knew that no matter where she ended up in math, she would end up higher with the music. I also did it because Haley has a very short temper and needs to learn to be able to work through problems. I felt that learning to work through these little basic piano pieces that only had 8 measures would teach her to solve problems in other areas of life.

What about practice? How did you manage to keep it regular and fun?

We did many different things. One time I used a chart and after so many days, bought them ice cream. It didn't matter what I did—I would always do something. One thing that's kind of silly now that we do—it's just a passing thing—but the girls got a dachshund puppy last year. The book said that when you leave the house put classical music on. I knew it was just for a calming effect. I thought, "This is really going to be my thing." So the puppy, for the past year, goes under the piano bench for every practice. That's just one thing. Now, with Julianna, she doesn't want to practice as much. She's practiced since she was 5 years old two times a day, many hours, and right now I'm going to challenge her and I'm going to actually pay her for her practice. She gets \$5 for a performance. I feel it's hard work, it's a commitment, and I think it's worth it. Also, she wants to play piano when she grows up, so I want her to know this is a way she can make a living some day. Whatever I have to do to keep them on piano, I'll do it.

Do you think music listening makes a difference?

Very much so. If I really believe in something, then I'm one that will do what's asked. Because Bruce says "play the tape," I do play the tape. My children go to bed at night with the tape. We do not have TV during the school week, not really because of the music, but because with four children, I couldn't get homework done, so it was just easier to say "no TV during the school week." So they come in from school and I have the music going. I now have another teenager that's 15, so obviously there's other music in the house. But my girls, if they're going to be doing a recital, or even when Julianna and Haley did the competition, that one piece would be played over and over again. I can always tell a difference.

It's become more complicated because we're now trying to listen to Book 4 and Book 1, and when Haley doesn't listen to her Book 1 especially, you can tell in the beat, you can tell in the rhythm. The music tends to become a bit more harsh than if she's listening regularly. But even to take it a step further, Haley has excelled, I think, rather fast because she's got all these tunes in her head from listening to Julianna's tapes. Even going to a lesson, the music is in the car.

In your opinion, how important are the group lessons?

I think that the group lessons are important because of friendship, and I think that sometimes when you're on piano, and when you're there day after day after day, you might think that you're the only one there. I think when you go to group lessons you're there with friends and it's very different than what you're getting in a private lesson. In group lessons, the tempo is always discussed, and also the time signatures—things like that. The private lesson is more technical, the group lesson is more theory. And if you take the time and stay for the more advanced group, you learn the practice spots for the next piece.

For you, what was the most significant factor contributing to progress?

I think the workshops—going to Kentucky, going to Atlanta. Julianna has met friends from Atlanta, from Ohio, and other places. It keeps things going when the going gets tough. Also important, I think, is the teacher. You need to have a teacher with a positive attitude, especially at times when you're not especially prepared. You know it doesn't have to be a threatening situation. My children never feel like they have to worry—they know there will be no harsh words.